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Money
The Jerusalem Post Business Supplement

Shalom: Panel won't okay child allowance cuts

EVELYN GORDON and DAVID HARRIS

CUTS in child allowances, payments for doctors visits, and higher medicine prices will never pass the Knesset Finance Committee, MK Silvan Shalom (Likud), who heads the coalition in the committee, told members of the Knesset's social caucus yesterday.

Shalom said there was a broad consensus in the committee against these three proposals. The committee has already sent the child allowance proposal back to the Treasury. It has not yet discussed the two health-related items - which are con-

tained to amendments to the National Health Law - because the Treasury is still negotiating with the health funds about several of the proposed changes in the law.

Foreign Minister David Levy also said yesterday he would not support the budget as it stands now, and intimated that he would resign if changes were not made.

"I am not the sort to vote against the government and remain in it," he told Israel Radio.

The social caucus meeting was called to discuss the additional NIS 1.8 billion in cuts approved by the cabinet Monday. However, it was clear that the caucus's real objections centered

on the NIS 4.9b. cuts originally proposed by the Treasury, and especially the three items mentioned by Shalom. These three things are all part of the Economic Arrangements Law accompanying the budget.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will attempt to persuade all coalition MKs to support the government's newly approved NIS 6.7b. package of cuts to the 1997 budget.

"I intend passing this budget, including the cut," said Netanyahu. "I understand the social sensitivity expressed by ministers. I understand it because

I too have such feelings." "I very much hope that some coalition members will stand by their words and not let the budget - and especially the Economic Arrangements Law - pass," said Shaul Amor (Likud). "I will not vote for the budget in its present format. We

have a social welfare coalition today, and if we maintain it, we can defeat the government coalition."

Meir Sheerit (Likud) went even further. "I am utterly opposed to the government's decrees regarding child allowances and payments for health care," he said. "If these

remain, I will vote against the budget."

Opposition MKs admitted the real power lay with coalition MKs, since only they can realistically trade votes for concessions.

Mordechai: Budget doesn't meet IDF's needs, Page 2

sions with the government. When Naomi Blumenthal (Likud) demanded to know whether the opposition would vote for the budget if the changes demanded by the caucus were made, most opposition MKs sheepishly refused to answer.

However, the opposition participated with equal enthusiasm in the anti-budget rhetoric.

"This is the moment of truth for the social caucus," said Rafi Elul (Labor).

"You're spitting in the faces of the weaker members of society," added Labor faction chairman Ra'anan Cohen. "[Foreign Minister David Levy] has said he would not consider himself part of this government if this were its budget. But I fear that come December 31, the budget will pass, and he'll continue to be in the government."

Some caucus members also raised objections to the Treasury's proposed cuts in the Demobilized Soldiers Law, the Senior Citizens Law, and the Capital Investment (Continued on Page 4)



Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin talks with Interior Minister Avigdor Kahalani (left) and Prisons Service Commissioner Arye Bibi at Nitzan Prison in Ramle yesterday. Story, Page 12

Netanyahu rejects Egypt's Moussa as Hebron mediator

DAVID MAKOVSKY

PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected a call by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak for Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa to intercede in the Hebron redeployment negotiations.

In a briefing yesterday, a senior diplomatic official told reporters that Mubarak made the suggestion in a phone call to Netanyahu Monday night.

Israel opposes increased involvement by Moussa for several reasons. As a compromise, Netanyahu and Mubarak agreed that foreign policy adviser Dore Gold would go to Cairo today and meet with Mubarak's national security adviser Osama Baz to discuss the issue of Egyptian involvement.

The senior diplomatic official noted Cairo has significant political leverage with the Palestinians and could therefore be useful in urging the Palestinian Authority to conclude the talks. At the same time, Israel does not want to replace the US with Egypt as the mediator of the peace talks, due to Cairo's reflexive support for the Palestinian position, officials in the Prime Minister's Office said.

"We want Egypt to modify Palestinian demands, but we must also be careful. Egypt sees itself as almost a formal side to these talks. We have to be careful about setting a precedent for the future of talks with the Palestinians," the senior official said.

Officials do not hide the fact that they view Moussa as being hard-line, seeking not to bridge differences but often to widen them by urging the Palestinians to adopt harsher positions.

However, Baz is considered by Israel to be more balanced. Baz has played a constructive role along with US special Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross in offering ideas to break the Hebron impasse.

Responding to the committee's approval of the neighborhood, Ahmed Qureia, speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, said: "This is an attempt to kill the peace process."

Hinting at possible Palestinian riots, Qureia said: "It is very dangerous, and Israel should expect a reaction that will hurt the peace process."

Ordinarily, plans such as these need to be approved by the Interior Minister before they are implemented. But yesterday Interior Minister Eli Shussna disqualified himself from this role because of a conflict of interest. Shussna, as head of the planning (Continued on Page 4)



have become strained since the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel exit. King Hussein has refused to see Netanyahu or other Israeli ministers since.

Jordanian Ambassador Omar Rifai said Muasher is carrying letters from Jordanian Prime Minister Karim Abu-Khazem to Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Foreign Minister David Levy. Rifai said

the letter calls for the need to "keep the peace process going and keep peace on track."

Muasher will hold separate meetings with Mordechai and Levy today, and with Netanyahu on Friday, after the premier returns from his current Hanukkah family break in Mitze Ramon.

During his trip, he also will meet with Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon, Arab MKs, Labor MKs Ehud Barak and Yossi Belim, as well as Meretz MK Yossi Sarid, and Leah Rabin. Muasher has no plans to meet with Shimon Peres.

It remains unclear whether Muasher will discuss Jordan's hope to boost trade with Iraq, now that the UN has agreed to a partial (Continued on Page 4)

Hizbullah steps up retaliation threats for civilian casualties

DAVID RUDGE

HIZBULLAH has intensified its threats to retaliate for the harming of Lebanese civilians by Israel.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai revealed that the organization has been receiving massive arms supplies from Iran through Syria.

The latest warnings came from Mohammed Raed, a Hizbullah member of the Lebanese parliament who stressed the organization was committed to protecting Lebanese civilians.

He said Hizbullah's patience was limited and Israel would bring disaster and tragedy on itself if it continued what he called its policies of aggression.

Reed was one of several leading Hizbullah officials to make such comments following the incident on Saturday in which seven civilians were wounded in Tibnit village, north of the security zone, as a result of IDF tank fire.

The incident occurred during heavy exchanges following a Hizbullah roadside bomb attack near Beaufort Castle in which an IDF soldier was killed and another wounded.

Mordechai visited the zone yesterday in a show of support for the South Lebanese Army and its commander Gen. Antoine Lahad.

A Beirut military court last Friday sentenced Lahad, in absentia, to death, for collaborating with Israel.

Mordechai said the sentence was "not worth the paper it is written on," and said he was glad to be able to shake hands with Lahad, "one of Lebanon's greatest patriots, who is safeguarding Lebanese land."

Vilna's: We're ready for war, Page 2

The minister was accompanied by Chief of Staff Lt-Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, OC Northern Command Maj-Gen. Amiram Levine, and Uri Lubrani, the government's coordinator in Lebanon.

"This was a mock trial designed to try and undermine the presence of Israel's forces here, and the SLA and its commander. It will have no effect and things will continue here as normal," Lubrani told *The Jerusalem Post*.

"This was undoubtedly a Syrian attempt to show that they have a way of forcing Lebanon to take steps which are convenient for Syria. I don't for one minute think that there is one Lebanese who would

have taken this decision to try Gen. Lahad without having been coerced into doing so by Syria," said Lubrani.

Lahad himself shrugged off the trial and the sentencing, which Mordechai described as being part of the psychological war being waged against the SLA by Hizbullah and a Lebanese government under the influence of Syria and possibly Iran and other elements.

Mordechai revealed that large quantities of arms and other supplies had been airlifted by Iran to Syria, and from there had been transported to Hizbullah in Lebanon.

"We know of a flow of weapons. We don't have the ability to say what kind of weapons or whether they are more sophisticated," said Mordechai.

The fact, however, of the supply of weapons on such a large scale creates a more complex and dangerous situation in Lebanon," said Mordechai.

Fighting continued in south Lebanon yesterday with IAF warplanes striking at Hizbullah targets in the Jabal Soudj region on the edge of the security zone in the eastern sector.

(Continued on Page 4)

Jewish neighborhood approved for Ras al-Amud

HERB KEINON and news agencies

A JEWISH neighborhood in the middle of Ras al-Amud was approved by the Jerusalem District Planning Committee yesterday, prompting Palestinian threats that the move could spark a new round of violence.

The new neighborhood - if approved by a yet-to-be-determined government minister - will consist of 132 housing units on 14 dunams of land in the Arab neighborhood south of the Mount of Olives. The neighborhood, which will be financed in part by American millionaire Irving Moskowitz, will be surrounded by a 1.8-meter high security fence.

Responding to the committee's approval of the neighborhood, Ahmed Qureia, speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, said: "This is an attempt to kill the peace process."

Hinting at possible Palestinian riots, Qureia said: "It is very dangerous, and Israel should expect a reaction that will hurt the peace process."

Ordinarily, plans such as these need to be approved by the Interior Minister before they are implemented. But yesterday Interior Minister Eli Shussna disqualified himself from this role because of a conflict of interest. Shussna, as head of the planning (Continued on Page 4)

Pinhasi announced yesterday that in Dayan's case, the refund would be operative for a six-month period "in the hope it will help bring about a reconciliation between him and his wife."

Dayan himself hosted a hanukka party at the Great Synagogue yesterday for 150 homeless children who live in Jerusalem boarding schools. The children were also given a guided tour of the Knesset. Dayan holds a similar party every year.

their spouses join them, as long as their previous home is not rented out.

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plained he was away too much from his Migdal Ha'emek home and his four children, because of his work in the Knesset.

MKs who want to rent an apartment to the capital generally receive a \$600 monthly rent refund on condition they live there without their families. Since Dayan wants to take his family with him, he was not eligible for the rent subsidy under the current policy.

Knesset House Committee chairman Raphael Pinhasi discussed the issue with Knesset legal adviser Zvi Inbar, and the two recommended allowing the \$600 refund for all cases in which MKs rent apartments in Jerusalem, regardless of whether

Knesset to fund MK Haim Dayan's reconciliation attempts

LIAT COLLINS

THE Knesset House Committee hopes to bring *shalom bayit* (domestic peace) to alleged wife-beater MK Haim Dayan (Tzomet), by subsidizing an apartment for him and his family in Jerusalem.

Dayan, who blamed his well-publicized marital problems on his long absences from home, asked the committee to fund part of the rent for a Jerusalem apartment where he would live with his family.

Last month, Dayan's wife Rabel accused him of beating her, although she later dropped the charges. At the time, he com-

plained he was away too much from his Migdal Ha'emek home and his four children, because of his work in the Knesset.

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Vilna'i: IDF ready for war

THE IDF is well prepared for war, and the reason the country's enemies have not launched an attack is because they know just how ready Israel is. Deputy Chief of General Staff Maj. Gen. Mitan Vilna'i said yesterday.

Syrian President Hafez Assad "has no illusions about what would happen when he starts to battle. He knows that he'll take a beating," Vilna'i told a gathering of directors from the ORT organization in Jerusalem last night.

Vilna'i's comment was the IDF top brass's first public response to a report in *Time* magazine citing unnamed senior military sources as saying Israel was not ready for war and had let its stocks run down and training slacken.

One of the key IDF commanders responsible for planning Israel's defense, Vilna'i said the IDF prefers a policy of long-range planning in which more is invested in building units rather than stockpiling ammunition. He added that the IDF brass was intensively dealing with war

ARIEH O'SULLIVAN and DAVID RUDGE

preparations.

Vilna'i told the gathering of rehabilitation trainers that the IDF has a plan to increase motivation among the youth. He also said that in January the army was to revise the medical profile system in a way that would reduce the number of recruits who are exempt from service on medical grounds.

"It is inconceivable that large percentages (of the public) do not serve in the army or receive an exemption," Vilna'i said.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai yesterday reiterated his call to Syria's Assad to return to the negotiating table as soon as possible.

Mordechai stressed that Israel had no intention of launching a war against Syria and on the contrary was anxious to

resume the peace talks. Mordechai spoke to reporters during a visit to the security zone in a gesture of support for South Lebanese Army commander Gen. Antoine Lahad.

"We don't want to be in a situation where we are talking about the possibility of a war," Mordechai said. "We are in a situation where we are asking and calling on President Assad and the Syrian government to come and continue the negotiations."

Mordechai also was asked whether Israel would insist on a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in the event of an agreement by which the IDF would pull out of the security zone.

"I don't know who would withdraw first from Lebanon. I think, however, the best solution would be for all the foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon," he said.

"If Lebanon had an agreement with Israel it would benefit everybody in this area and guarantee their safety and a peaceful life," Mordechai added.

Defense budget doesn't meet IDF needs - Mordechai

DAVID RUDGE and LIAT COLLINS

DEFENSE Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said the proposed defense budget would not meet the IDF's requirements, especially in light of its future missions.

The IDF is seeking an additional NIS 3 billion in funding for various requirements, primarily on the basis of revised intelligence assessments that war is more likely than in the past.

Problems of shortages were highlighted in recent reports in the foreign press, according to which there were deficiencies in stocks of some materials.

"There are gaps, which have not been hidden from the public, primarily in the fields of stocks. The army and General Staff, have recommended changes in the budget to resolve the deficiencies of stores," said Mordechai. "These things are in the process of being implemented. It is still not enough, and more resources and budgets are needed."

"To conclude from this, however, that the IDF does not have capabilities would be a fatal mistake," Mordechai said the IDF would submit reports to the government in the coming weeks about its requirements and the "financial significance" of its needs. "I expect all the necessary adjustments to be implemented this year," said Mordechai.

However, Mordechai stated that all ministers had a national responsibility and that he had agreed to the cuts in the defense budget because of the economic situation of the country - the proposed 0.5 percent cut in the defense budget was relatively minor compared to the cutbacks in other ministries.

Earlier yesterday, members of



the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, called on Mordechai to clarify why he had agreed to the budget cut for the ministry when he had previously insisted it needed to be increased particularly in view of the security situation in the north.

At next Monday's meeting between the committee and the prime minister, the issue will be raised again MKs said yesterday. Committee chairman Uzi Landau (Likud) said: "I'm very worried that we have to cut the budget by NIS 150 million. I think it should be increased. There has been a tendency to cut over the past decade. The Syrian threats and the fact we could face confrontation with the Palestinian Authority, which is also arming itself, means we could be tested. My automatic support for the defense budget cannot be taken for granted."

"The vote by the defense minister and the government in favor of a cut in the defense budget is serious and surprising," said Meretz leader Yossi Sarid. "Mordechai convinced us that the defense budget must be increased because of the deterioration of the security situation and yet he himself is taking part in the cutting."

Meanwhile, Mordechai has reportedly threatened to reduce his appearances before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee because of leaks from the committee room. News of a letter he sent to Landau, Chief of Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, and the member MKs also leaked out.

In the letter, Mordechai reportedly said the details that got out from his meeting with the committee last week had harmed national security.

Immigrant scientists demand job security

BATSHEVA TSUR

SOME 200 immigrant scientists yesterday demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's Office to express fears about their academic positions.

The protest came despite an earlier announcement by Yisrael B'aliya ministers Natan Sharansky and Yuli Edelstein that they had secured a budget for the continued employment of the scientists in the country's institutes of higher learning and research.

"That achievement [of the ministers] is an important first step," said Dr. Shlomo Stavrov, deputy head of the Organization of Immigrant Scientists, which organized the demonstration. "But we need more."

Stavrov said the scientists had not received assurances they would be able to continue basic research in their existing places of work on a permanent basis and under the same conditions as non-immigrants.

Under the previous government, Stavrov said, a plan had been drawn up to employ the scientists permanently and under the same conditions as their non-immigrant counterparts. "The previous government would have allocated NIS 30m. for 1997 and reached a sum of NIS 100m annually by the year 2000," he said.

Edelstein, who met the previous night with representatives of the organization, expressed surprise they had gone ahead with the demonstration. "They told us they were satisfied," his spokesman, Yehuda Glick, said. "We don't understand what they are demonstrating about."

Glick said the ministers had succeeded in getting \$12m. allocated altogether for the scientists under "what is known as the Kame'a plan. (Kame'a is a Hebrew acronym for the Advancement of Immigrant Scientists). That would cover the first group of 100 scientists whose contracts with the universities had after three years in September 1997 and up to 800 others, he said.

"The bulk of scientists came [to their places of work] later," Glick said, "and they are still covered by the funds allocated under the Giladi plan," a program begun three years ago to absorb leading immigrant scientists into institutes of research and teaching on a temporary basis.

He added that another group of scientists working in industry and technology would get an allocation of \$5m. from the total budget of \$12m.

According to reports in the Russian-language press yesterday, the Yisrael B'aliya ministers had tacitly given them the go-ahead for the demonstration, in the hope that continued pressure would assure the funds. But Yisrael B'aliya sources said the scientists may have been motivated by activists appointed under the previous government to deal with the issue.

Stavrov, however, denied that. "I never dream I would have to leave my laboratory and turn into a demonstrator in Israel," he said.



IDF soldiers order Palestinian demonstrators to leave disputed land that settlers in the Jordan Valley tried to farm yesterday. (Reuters)

Palestinians try to stop farm work in disputed Jordan Valley land

HERB KEINON

THE IDF prevented some 30 Palestinian protesters from blocking agricultural work by settlers yesterday at an area called the Yugoslav experimental farm in the Jordan Valley.

The Palestinians claim that under the Oslo accords the 400-dunam stretch of land belongs to them, while Israel maintains it belongs to Moshav Masua in the Jordan Valley.

A number of Palestinians reportedly blocked tractors trying to cultivate the land, but were removed by IDF forces. The army reported no arrests.

The area, in which Yugoslavia

invested a number of years ago, has been the site of Palestinian-Israeli contention a number of times over the last two months.

The Palestinians maintain that the area belongs to them under the Oslo accords, which say that all experimental farms in the territories will be given to the Palestinians. The Israelis, however, maintain that the area ceased being an experimental farm in 1988, and since that time has belonged to the World Zionist Organization and then to Mshav Masua.

Meir Karif, a spokesman for the coordinator of government activities in the territories, said that the area "clearly belongs to Israel." But, he said, "the issue is currently being discussed" between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

For over a year the Jordan Valley settlers have, at the request of the government, not worked the land. They attempted to do so a couple of times in the last few months, and each time were met by protesting Palestinians.

Yesterday, said David Elhayani, head of the Jordan Valley

Settlements Committee, it was decided to plant wheat at the site, and the Palestinians came and blocked the tractors.

The settlers were escorted by a contingent of IDF soldiers, who removed the protesters. Among the Palestinians at the scene at one point was Saeb Erekat, the PA's chief negotiator and minister of local government affairs.

Elhayani termed the Palestinian protest a "provocation" meant to create tension in the area. He said the protest was organized, and is an orchestrated attempt by the PA to "grab any piece of territory it can in the area."

Histadrut declares general work dispute

BATSHEVA TSUR

THE Histadrut parliament yesterday voted to declare a general work dispute in the workforce, as a prelude to a strike to protest the government's planned budget cuts.

A general strike is expected to begin on December 26.

Several Likud members of the Histadrut body abstained from the vote. Moreover, large unions, that have in the past joined Histadrut strikes, have not promised they will participate in the upcoming action since they say this strike appears to be politically motivated. (Tm)

Education Ministry: Budget cuts won't hurt

BATSHEVA TSUR

ONLY two days after Education Minister Zevulun Hammer threatened to vote against the state budget, his ministry's director-general, Benzion Dell, yesterday made light of the proposed NIS 125 million cut in education.

"It doesn't bother me. It won't really cause harm," Dell told *The Jerusalem Post*. "We have to see everything in proportion. The sun sliced from our budget is only 0.65% of the total ministry budget of NIS 18 billion."

Originally, the Treasury proposed cutting NIS 250m.

Dell yesterday began a "budget marathon" with heads of the ministry's various departments who, like the ministries that had been instructed to make their own cuts, were given directives about slicing their own budgets. Over the next few days, they will present their plans for the coming year and these will be reviewed again in the summer, he said.

"Our line is not to tell every unit where to cut but rather to tell them what not to cut," Dell said.

He said he instructed them not to make cuts that would affect the number of teaching hours. They had also been told the cuts

could not bring about an increase in the number of pupils in a given class.

Dell gave examples of what, to his thinking, could serve as cuts in some of the departments.

"It is possible to cut down the sports budget," he said. "We don't want to give the pupils fewer gym classes. But it is possible to cut budgets for example, to the Hapoel sports meet, or to the Maccabiah."

Another way to help save those millions, he said, would be to cut down on programs in Educational TV. *The Erev hadash* news program would not be affected. "That is very cheap and costs a mere \$7,000," he said. "But if one or two other programs are not produced this will not harm education."

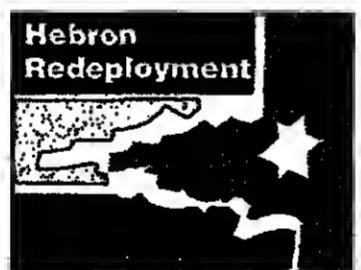
Yet another proposal was to reduce the number of study programs being developed. "If we tell the program unit to produce, let us say, 28 rather than 30 programs this coming year, that won't be a disaster," he said.

"At all events, the department heads have a free hand, so long as they remain within the guidelines."

Third Way presents budget alternative, Page 8

Settlers, Moslems argue over Hebron vandalism

HERB KEINON



belonging to Jews were discovered by the police. The settlers vehemently denied this, and claimed it was part of an attempt to paint the settlement in a negative light.

Kahalani, while touring the Nitzan Prison in Ramle yesterday, said that he will look into the circumstances surrounding the arrest of Arnon and "respond accordingly, without hiding anything."

In a related development, thousands of people attended a Hamukka rally in support of the settlement. At the same time, Interior Minister Eli Suissa dedicated a new municipal building for Kiryat Arba.

"We are marvelling that miracles and wonders are happening now, as they did then [in the days of the Hasmonaens]," Suissa said during the dedication ceremony.

HEBRON settlement activists were standing by their story that the Jewish section of the cave was vandalized on Sunday, even though the police are saying that the alleged vandalism was just a misunderstanding.

The settlers claimed that Sunday, when the Moslems enjoyed complete access to the cave, someone vandalized the mezuza to the cave, and tried to break into a locked bookcase and the ark holding the Torah scrolls.

Effi Arditi, chief operations officer for the Judea and Samaria police district, said that a tape of the events showed a man kneeling down near the bookcase, but that after he was questioned by the police it was clear that he was only trying to replace something that fell, not trying to break in.

Arditi said that there was no attempt to break into the ark, and that nothing happened to the mezuza.

But, Ori Shtruck, a spokeswoman for the settlement, said that settlement leaders were told of the alleged vandalism by the border police officers in charge of the cave at the time. Furthermore, she said that the mezuza's parchment was stolen, and that there was obviously an attempt to steal the mezuza as well.

These conflicting versions of events are further straining an already tense relationship between settlers and the police in Hebron, following the arrest, on Shabbat, of settlement leader Noam Arnon, and a claim made by Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani a few weeks ago that arms caches

IDF stops Palestinian students from reentering campus

IDF soldiers scuffled with Palestinians outside Hebron's Islamic University yesterday, a day after students occupied the campus in protest of its closure by the army. Some students threw stones at an army jeep.

The Islamic University students who rallied outside the campus were angry over the army's denial that it had agreed to hold talks on opening the school within a week.

"They tricked us," said Ahmed Tmaizi, a first-year student. "We want to study."

The IDF closed the university last March, following four suicide bombings by Islamic militants inside Israel. Israel claimed the school - where many students support the militant group Hamas - was a center of militancy. (AP)

Barak visits Vizhnitzer rebbe; meets MK Amir Peretz

LABOR leadership candidate MK Ehud Barak visited the large Bnei Brak court of Vizhnitzer Rebbe Moshe Yehoshua Hager yesterday.

Barak was warmly greeted by some 4,000 hassidim, who surrounded him, tried to touch his clothes and called his name repeatedly. "They treated him as though he was some kind of a rock star," sources close to Barak said.

In another development, Barak met MK Amir Peretz in Jerusalem on Monday. Peretz is considered the closest supporter of MK Haim

Ramon, Barak's arch rival in the party and to whom Peretz owes his position as Histadrut chairman.

Peretz would not say what the meeting was about, or whether he was transferring his allegiance to Barak, noting only "that too is a possibility. Ramon isn't running for leadership at this stage, so everything is open. I don't know what is yet to develop in the party."

Michal Yudelman

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chil

State justifies 'intensive' probe of Hamas bus bomber

HASSAN Salameh, the Hamas member who planned and organized three suicide bombings in February and March of this year, was responsible for a number of other terror attacks as well, the state told the High Court of Justice yesterday.

The state was responding to a petition by Salameh against the General Security Service's interrogation of him.

Salameh was arrested in Hebron last May, and in August was indicted for planning and organizing the two number 18 bus bombings in Jerusalem and a suicide bombing in Ashkelon. The bombs killed 45 people and wounded 90. Last month, the GSS received information

EVELYN GORDON

that Salameh had been involved in other attacks and began interrogating him again December 1.

During the course of the interrogation, according to a deposition by government attorney Shai Nitzan, Salameh confessed to organizing a donkey-cart bombing in Gaza in 1995 in which some soldiers were wounded. He also confessed to recruiting and training a terrorist cell in Gaza.

However, Nitzan continued, the GSS's information indicates Salameh may also have been involved in other unsolved attacks in Gaza.

The GSS is hoping to discover the identities of the perpetrators of these attacks, so they can be caught. It also wants any information Salameh may have about other terrorists in Gaza, about planned attacks which have not yet been committed, and about caches of explosives. There is reason to believe Salameh has information that, if discovered, could prevent future attacks, Nitzan said.

Because of this, he argued, an "intensive" investigation is justified. However, he added, it is not true that Salameh is being kept in chains all the time, though he is bound some of the time. Nor is it true that he is being forced to sleep only in his underwear in the cold.

Knesset discusses security of taxi drivers

THE government should do more to protect taxi drivers, but the drivers must also contribute to their own security, the Knesset Economics Committee said yesterday.

The committee was discussing the problem of attacks on taxi drivers. Driver Tzabi Ezra, for instance, described how some Arabs disguised as students had asked him to take them to Ofra, in the territories, then threw him in a ditch and stole his taxi.

EVELYN GORDON

Committee chairman Elie Goldschmidt (Labor) said that since buses have already been equipped with distress buttons, there is no reason taxis could not be as well, except that the Transport Ministry has not bothered.

However, Nissim Dahan (Shas) responded that the cost of various safety devices is not high, and

they are tax-deductible.

"Why are taxi drivers unwilling to spend NIS 2,000 to protect themselves?" he asked.

"Apparently, they don't see the situation as being so terrible," Avi Yehzekel (Labor) said the taxi drivers' organizations must decide what they are willing to pay for themselves and what they are asking from the govern-

ment. Avraham Fried, head of the taxi drivers' association, said that since the government collects some NIS 180 million a year from taxi licenses, it ought to spend some of that money on the drivers' security.

Asst.-Cmdr. Yitzhak Zur told the committee that in 1995, there were 40 cases of attacks on taxi drivers, of which 22 had been solved. The main barrier to solving more cases, he said, is money.



Young visitors to the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel's Abu Kabir Nature Garden feed and pet one of the animals as part of a project begun yesterday for blind and deaf children. (Vera Ezzion)

Clalit clinic workers to strike tomorrow

JUDY SIEGEL

KUPAT Holim Clalit's community clinics and hospitals will be disrupted tomorrow by a 24-hour strike by 30,000 employees. The unions - representing 30,000 nurses, pharmacists and administrative and maintenance workers - are part of the protest, but the doctors are not.

The unions say they are protesting the health-fund management's plans to replace regular staffers with temporary workers in a variety of services, including the supply of medication.

Management said yesterday it was doing its best to head off a "needless strike, by which the unions aim solely to show their muscles and achieve personal gains at the expense of the health fund and its dedicated staff."

The unions recently rejected a number of management proposals. If unable to get treatment at Clalit hospitals, urgent cases can go to the emergency rooms at government and other public hospitals, and they will be reimbursed by the health fund.

Asher Fisch to make Covent Garden debut

HELEN KAYE

ISRAELI conductor Asher Fisch will make his Covent Garden, London, debut tomorrow night at "A Gold and Silver Gala" which celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Royal Opera Company's first performance, and the 25th anniversary of tenor Placido Domingo's debut appearance on that stage.

"Covent Garden knows me," said Fisch. "Of course they asked Placido, because it's really his party, and he agreed very happily."

Fisch said that the gala's scheduled conductor, Sir Edward Downes, had asked to be replaced, and revealed that Covent Garden has invited him to conduct a yet to be decided upon production "some time down the line. These things are always scheduled two to three years ahead."

Domingo and he are good friends, said Fisch who was only seven in 1965 when Domingo, then a young and barely known tenor, sang two seasons at the Israeli Opera, under Edis de Philippe.

Fisch is currently music director of the Israel Symphony Orchestra, Rishon le-Zion, artistic director of the Vienna Folk Opera, and artistic advisor to the New Israeli Opera where he'll conduct a revival of *The Barber of Seville* later this



Asher Fisch

season. Besides Domingo, the line-up of singers includes opera's hottest couple, Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna. Galina Korchakova, and Samuel Ramey. They'll all get to meet Prince Charles at a reception for those who bought the most expensive (£1,000) tickets after the show. Will Fisch get to meet the Prince? "I hope so," he said. "I expect to."

Arbel: Family must ask for child-murderer's pardon

EVELYN GORDON

STATE Attorney Edna Arbel said yesterday she opposes the immediate release of Moshe Azariya, who was convicted in the murder of a young boy 15 years ago, but told the Supreme Court she would recommend he be pardoned if his family would submit a request.

Arbel was responding to a request by Azariya's attorney, Boaz Sanjaro, that Azariya be released until the court rules on his request for a retrial. The request was submitted last year on the basis of what Sanjaro claims is important new evidence. There have long been questions about Azariya's conviction, with one police deputy-commander insisting for years he was innocent.

Arbel said the state has long been urging Azariya's family to request a pardon for him, but the family has refused. If the family did ask for clemency, she said, the Justice Ministry would recommend that President Ezer Weizman grant the request, as long as appropriate arrangements were made for Azariya's care.

Azariya has been mentally retarded since birth and later developed psychiatric problems for which he has been hospitalized for several years.

The family never even asked that he be declared eligible for parole. Arbel said. However, the ministry decided to treat Sanjaro's request to the court for Azariya's release - which also said he should be eligible for parole - as if it were a request submitted directly to the ministry and has begun work on this process.

Even if his life sentence were reduced to allow parole, it would be set at 30 years. With one-third off for good behavior, that would mean Azariya still would have another five years of his sentence to serve, Arbel noted.

The fact that Azariya requested a retrial is not reason enough to release him, Arbel said, especially as the new evidence, in the state's eyes, is worthless.

Finally, she said, a new law enabling lighter sentences for murderers with "diminished responsibility," such as the mentally disturbed, cannot apply to Azariya's case, as the law is not retroactive.

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Grinning Saddam turns on oil-for-food pipeline

KIRKUK, Iraq (AP) - Flashing a wide grin, Saddam Hussein yesterday switched on the pipeline carrying oil from this northern city to Turkey, signaling Iraq's freedom to resume limited oil exports for the first time since 1990.

Iraq was free to export oil under strict UN supervision yesterday following the world body's go-ahead Monday for an oil-for-food deal designed to alleviate the suffering of Iraq's 20 million people under six years of UN sanctions.

France hailed the end to the ban and said it would lobby for a complete end to sanctions once Iraq fulfilled conditions set by the UN Security Council.

Saddam, braving heavy rains, read a verse from the Koran before switching on the pipeline. Iraqi Oil Minister Gen. Amir Mohammed Rashid said Iraq will favor Turkey in oil contracts, but gave no details. Turkey snapped up the first batch of Iraqi crude. State-owned oil refiner Tupras said it signed an accord with Iraqi state oil marketing body SOMO to take 75,000 barrels per day, equivalent to 3.6 million tons of oil a year, effective immediately.

The Turkish company statement gave no

News agencies

price for the deal. Turkey says it has lost \$27 billion in trade because of the sanctions.

In Baghdad, newspapers devoted most of their front pages to news of the oil-for-food deal, saying it constituted the first crack in the crippling UN sanctions imposed on the country after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The oil-for-food deal, reached last May, is a reprieve from the sanctions. It allows Iraq to export \$2 billion of oil over an initial 180-day period to buy food and medicine, sorely needed as a result of the sanctions.

"Yes to Saddam Hussein, who broke the sanctions and set Iraq's oil free," declared the government daily al-Jumhuriya.

In New York, Iraqi UN ambassador Nizar Hamdoon said exports could resume in a few days, and UN officials said about 260 companies from 25 countries have officially expressed interest in bidding for Iraqi contracts, though no contracts have been approved.

The sanctions on Iraq can only be fully lifted when the Security Council is satisfied Iraq has dismantled programs to develop long-range

missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq had long refused to accept the oil-for-food plan, saying it infringed on its sovereignty. It accepted the offer last May, but implementation has been delayed because of technical issues, differences of interpretation of the plan by the United Nations and the Iraqis, and Iraq's military incursion last August into Kurdish protected areas in northern Iraq.

In Paris, French Foreign Ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt said the clearance was an excellent outcome and called for the humanitarian aspect of the deal to be instituted soon.

"That said, resolution 986 (governing the deal) is not an end in itself. It is not a substitute for the lifting of sanctions which today weigh on Iraq," Rummelhardt said. "As soon as Iraq has fulfilled the conditions set by Security Council resolutions, our objective remains to arrive at a complete lifting of sanctions which will mark this country's return to the international community."

But US State Department spokesman Glyn Davies said the oil-for-food deal did "not signal an end or the first step toward the end of the sanctions" against Iraq.



Nobel Peace Prize winners Roman Catholic Bishop Carlos Belo and resistance leader Jose Ramos Horta receive their awards in Oslo's town hall yesterday. The two men received their prizes for championing East Timor's bid for independence from Indonesia.

Nobel winner Belo talks peace, snubs politics

OSLO (Reuters) - East Timorese Catholic Bishop Carlos Belo, co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, has brought a message of peace and reconciliation to Oslo and deftly avoided political comment on the situation in his troubled homeland.

"I am a religious leader. Leave the political issues to the politicians, please," Belo told a news conference on Monday, a day before the award ceremony in the Norwegian capital.

"As a religious leader, I am ready to collaborate with everybody who are really committed to efforts for peace and justice in East Timor," the bishop said.

Belo was awarded the prestigious prize along with self-exiled resistance leader Jose Ramos Horta for their efforts to find a peaceful end to the conflict in the former Portuguese colony, which has been in turmoil since Indonesia invaded it in 1975.

The bishop, who has defended his parishioners against human rights violations by the Indonesian military, has walked a tightrope between the territory's Jakarta-appointed government and his frustrated people.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas last month warned Belo against meddling in politics after an interview in which the German magazine *Der Spiegel* quoted him as saying Indonesian troops treated East Timorese like "scabby dogs" and "slaves."

Belo denied the remarks, saying he was misquoted. Belo, born in Baucau, East Timor, in February 1948, was ordained in July 1980 in Lisbon and returned a year later to take up a teaching position in his home town.

Belo's presence as an observer at UN-sponsored talks between long-time warring East Timorese factions proved crucial in the first dialogue, held in Austria in June, 1995, to include all the various parties.

Day 23 of Serbian students protests

BELGRADE (Reuters) - Tens of thousands of students took to the streets of Belgrade yesterday in what has become a daily ritual of mass protests against the socialist rule of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, eyewitnesses said.

The 23rd day of mass demonstrations against the reversal of the results of a November 17 municipal election which the opposition said it won, coincided with the Yugoslav federal parliament's first session since the disputed poll.

Opposition parties, which were due to stage their own daily protest march later yesterday, boycotted the session and vowed to stay away until Milosevic admitted he cheated them of their election victory in the capital and 14 other Serbian towns.

The legality of the election results is currently under examination by the Federal Supreme Court after the Serbian Supreme Court rejected opposition appeals over the weekend. The decision of the federal court was expected late yesterday.

Students said they had deposited a copy of Serbia's constitution at the republic's Supreme Court. "Today is World Human Rights Day and that is why we are reminding Serbia's Supreme Court of the law which they should respect," a student leader told Reuters.

Reports of the alleged beating of an opposition supporter who was arrested last Friday for carrying the effigy of Milosevic in prison garb have fueled the students' anger.

The pro-democracy rallies have posed the most sustained challenge to Milosevic's nine-year rule during which he has kept a tight grip on state institutions.

Belgrade has come under a barrage of western criticism for its handling of the elections. Yesterday NATO "strongly deplored" the cancellation of election results and called on Milosevic to reverse the decision.

French police arrest 14 tied to 1995 bombings

PARIS (AP) - Anti-terrorist police yesterday arrested 14 people in connection with a 1995 bombing campaign, but said the arrests had "no direct link" to the deadly subway attack a week ago.

Authorities said an anti-terrorist unit made the arrests in Paris and in the heavily immigrant suburbs ringing the city.

A Justice Ministry official said the arrests were linked to a continuing investigation of last year's bombings, which killed eight people and wounded 160 others.

The official said there was "no direct link" to the December 3

bombing of a crowded rush-hour train, which killed four people and wounded 86.

No one has claimed responsibility for last week's bombing. Investigators are said to be focusing on Algerian Islamic militants as the prime suspects.

RTL radio said the 14 arrested were suspected of having ties to Algerian Islamic extremist groups, including one that claimed responsibility for some of the 1995 attacks.

The Armed Islamic Group, a violent armed faction fighting to overthrow the government of Algeria, a former French colony,

has threatened to strike against France for its tacit support of the Algerian government.

Roland Jacquard, director of the International Terrorism Observatory, said French authorities were working to break up the Islamic extremist networks operating clandestinely in France.

"This type of operation isn't necessarily meant to find those guilty" of last week's bombing, he said. "It less them surround the fundamentalist movement and maybe come across notebooks with addresses or interesting lists."

Christopher: No nuclear arms in eastern, central Europe

BRUSSELS (AP) - Secretary of State Warren Christopher assured a nervous Russia yesterday that nuclear weapons would not be deployed in eastern and central Europe if NATO proceeds with an eastward expansion.

But the former Soviet allies would be backed by the nuclear-armed United States and the rest of NATO if they are attacked, American officials said.

Christopher offered the assurance to Russia in his ninth and final speech to the North Atlantic Council. He is retiring next month.

"We are declaring that in today's Europe, NATO has no intention, no plan and no need to station nuclear weapons on the territory of any new members," Christopher said. "We are affirming that no NATO nuclear forces are presently on alert."

Under the NATO charter, the US and the 15 other current members "will enjoy the protection that comes with NATO membership," including nuclear weapons, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said later.

Burns also stressed NATO would not be deterred from

expanding eastward, whatever Russia's views. "No country will have a veto," he said.

The NATO foreign ministers will hold a summit meeting July 8-9 to expand the alliance by adding at least three central and east European countries, probably in 1999. The NATO leaders then will invite some prospective new members to begin negotiations to enter the alliance.

It is an open secret that Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary would be taken in and possibly Romania and Slovenia as well.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel proposed, meanwhile, that NATO establish a committee to give Russia a voice in European security matters.

In a commentary in the Berlin newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, Kinkel wrote: "As Europe comes together, Russia and Ukraine must have a place that corresponds to their size and importance."

He said security "can only be organized with these two important countries, not against them."

Christopher also announced the allies had joined in endorsing US demands that Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic open a dia-

logue with opposition leaders and recognize last month's municipal elections. He threatened renewed sanctions unless Milosevic complied.

"We join in condemning the Serbian government's decision to ignore the results of the November 17 elections," he said in a prepared speech. "That decision must be reversed. The people of Serbia deserve what their neighbors in central Europe have: clean elections."

French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette said, "We must clearly make it known to the Serbian leadership that we are not prepared to accept the continued conduct that is contrary to universally accepted rules of democracy."

He said the allies "must send them a clear sign of condemnation" for cancelling the election results and "our condemnation of the attitude of the government toward opposition demonstrations."

European stability and peace in the Balkans could be at stake, Christopher said at a news conference Monday after arriving for NATO's winter meeting on his final overseas trip as secretary of state.

Pope to skip Christmas Day mass this year

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - Pope John Paul II, apparently heeding medical advice to conserve his strength, will skip Christmas Day mass this year, the Vatican said yesterday.

The mass, celebrated in St. Peter's Basilica, did not appear on a program of papal events scheduled for December 21-January 13.

There did not appear to be any other changes on the schedule when compared with previous years' programs, and the Vatican did not say if the Christmas Day mass would be held by a papal aide in St. Peter's, Christendom's largest church.

The 76-year-old pope will preside at a Christmas Eve mass on December 24 in St. Peter's Basilica and deliver his customary "Urbi et Orbi" blessing to the city and the world at noon on Christmas Day from the basilica's central balcony.

Mandela signs new equal rights constitution into law

SHARPEVILLE, South Africa (AP) - President Nelson Mandela visited the site of one of South Africa's most notorious massacres yesterday - International Human Rights Day - and signed into law a constitution guaranteeing equal rights to all races.

The signing culminated more than six years of negotiations between white and black leaders on the shape and ideology of post-apartheid South Africa.

"By our presence here today, we solemnly honor the pledge we made to ourselves and to the world, that South Africa shall redeem herself and thereby widen the frontiers of human freedom," said Mandela, who hoisted the document above his head to the cheers of an audience of 4,000 people.

One of the most liberal constitutions in the world, the 150-page charter is based on an interim document that took effect with the nation's first all-race election in 1994. Mandela's African National Congress won the vote to gain power, making him the nation's first black president.

Organizers chose the Sharpeville black township south of Johannesburg for the signing for two reasons. It was where police gunned down 69 black protesters in a 1960 massacre that galvanized the anti-apartheid movement.

Sharpeville also is part of Verereening, the town where the treaty ending the Anglo-Boer War was signed in 1902 to set up the present-day borders of South Africa.

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HIZBULLAH

(Continued from Page 1)

The IDF Spokesman said troops on operational duties in the region spotted a squad of gunmen. As a result, planes were scrambled.

The pilots reported accurate hits on the targets and all the planes returned safely to their bases, the spokesman said.

In an apparently related incident, IDF troops, on operational duties in the eastern sector of the zone, came under mortar and light-weapon fire yesterday afternoon. There were no casualties. IDF and SLA gunners returned fire.

MOUSSA

(Continued from Page 1)

lifting of the embargo, enabling Iraq to export \$2 billion of oil in return for food.

Muasher recently announced the dispatch of two top Jordanian ministers to Iraq, after a period of chill between the two countries. Recently, Kabariti met with Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammed Mehdi Saleh in Amman.

Jordanian officials say the visit to Iraq was prompted by concern about losing out to other regional neighbors in stepped up competition by Turkey, Gulf states, and international businessmen to gain a share of the lucrative oil-for-food deal.

RAS AL-AMUD

(Continued from Page 1)

committee, was instrumental in the early 1990s in moving this scheme through various planning stages.

"The Jews will build, and the Arabs will build [in Ras al-Amud]," said Suissa, "and they [the Arabs] will stop complaining that they are not given permits to build."

But Peace Now, which has been at the forefront of efforts to stop construction of the neighborhood, was far less sanguine. Spokesman Alon Amon said the neighborhood will "bring Jerusalem to a situation that will make Hebron look like the Garden of Eden. It is the first time since the Six Day War that it has been decided to plan a settlement in the heart of a

PANEL

(Continued from Page 1)

Encouragement Law. However, Shalom pointed out acceptable compromises had already been worked out in the committee regarding the first two of these issues.

Following yesterday's meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Chairman MK Uzi Landau told reporters he was disappointed by the government's decision to cut an extra NIS 150m. from the defense budget. "If anything, we need an increase," he said.

Meanwhile, Labor and Social Affairs Minister Eli Yishai has asked Shas leader Raphael

PANEL

Pinhasi to call a meeting to decide how to vote in the second and third readings of the budget, which will take place before the end of the month.

Shas' two minister's, Yishai and Interior Minister Eli Suissa, voted against the proposed additional cuts during Monday's marathon sitting of the cabinet. Levy and Tourism Minister Moshe Katsav also voted against the proposals, which they said will hit the weakest members of society the hardest.

Yishai's ministry faces an NIS

PANEL

38m. cut in this latest round of Treasury-led recommendations. Yishai told the cabinet he does not know where the extra money will come from, asking if it should be removed from the budget set aside for the mentally ill, older people, disabled, blind, battered women, children in danger, or the unemployed.

Communications Minister Limor Livnat said yesterday she did not object to her budget being cut from NIS 50m. to NIS 47m.

"The sooner the government reduces its interests and allows the private sector to be the main player," she said, "the less money I'll need in my budget."

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The Palestinian Authority's internal mini-drama

FAR from the limelight of the Hebron negotiations, a mini-drama is taking place in the internal Palestinian political arena which may later develop into quite a serious issue if it is not contained in its infancy.

Earlier this month, nine members of the Fatah local leadership in Gaza and the West Bank decided to resign from their posts in the organization - which is the leading one in the Palestinian Authority. Among the names that were mentioned, the most prominent were Hisham Abd a-Razeq and Sofyan Abu Zaida, both from

Gaza. The direct reason was the nomination of Ahmad Hillis, "Abu Maher," as the head of Fatah's "Marja' iya," "source of authority."

All nine activists later withdrew their resignations and this crisis was contained - all Fatah members understood that there is no alternative to Yasser Arafat's leadership. However, when reading deeper into the roots of the problem, one cannot avoid concluding that dissatisfaction of the local cadres of Fatah vis-a-vis the "outside" leadership could still create problems in the future which may

shake the PA.

The rejection of Abu Maher's leadership did not only stem from personal reasons. What weighed more was his background, in comparison with the background of the local leaders. Although Abu Maher is from a Gazan family, he is a part of Fatah's history "abroad" - namely in the military wing of Abu Jihad in Jordan, and in the Jarmak brigade in Lebanon. In the eyes of the local cadres of Fatah, the nomination meant that the criteria for serving the movement abroad weigh more than the intifada and extended suffering in

ANALYSIS PINHAS INBARI

Israeli prisons.

This leads to a deeper argument concerning who brought about the establishment of the PA: the armed struggle abroad or the intifada from within.

Once this argument begins, many other questions follow, such as why local Fatah is distanced from the negotiations with Israel. Such disturbing questions will create patterns of behavior that will not directly stir up tensions

between the "inside" and "outside" of Fatah, but will reflect a different judgment of the real interests of the Palestinians, for example, the visit of ex-intifada leaders from the West Bank, all of them deputies in the Palestinian Legislative Council, to Germany, in a triple delegation that included Knesset and Jordanian Parliament members as well. This formation stands against the PA policy of creating better relations with Egypt in preference to the relations with Israel and Jordan.

Differences of priorities are being exposed not mainly in for-

ign policy, but in the internal agenda. Not all of Fatah local leaders approve of the high priority the PA is giving to enterprises such as the Gaza harbor and airport. They believe that problems of releasing prisoners and tackling the Israeli government's settlement policy are much more pressing. This argument may soon lead to tensions between Israel and the local leadership in the West Bank, as they may run out of patience, and initiate activity on those two subjects, with the aim of compelling the PA to change its own list of priorities, as they make

wrong deductions from the meeting PA leader Yasser Arafat held lately in Bethlehem with a delegation of settlers.

On the one hand, the local Fatah in the West Bank understands the necessity of keeping good relations with Israel and Jordan, but, on the other hand, it cannot ignore the statements about enlarging settlements, fearing that "outside" Fatah is not susceptible enough to the local concerns.

The outcome could be an alliance with the Israeli left, to operate, in peaceful ways, in concert against the Likud government.

Christians fear nun's dream of quake warning

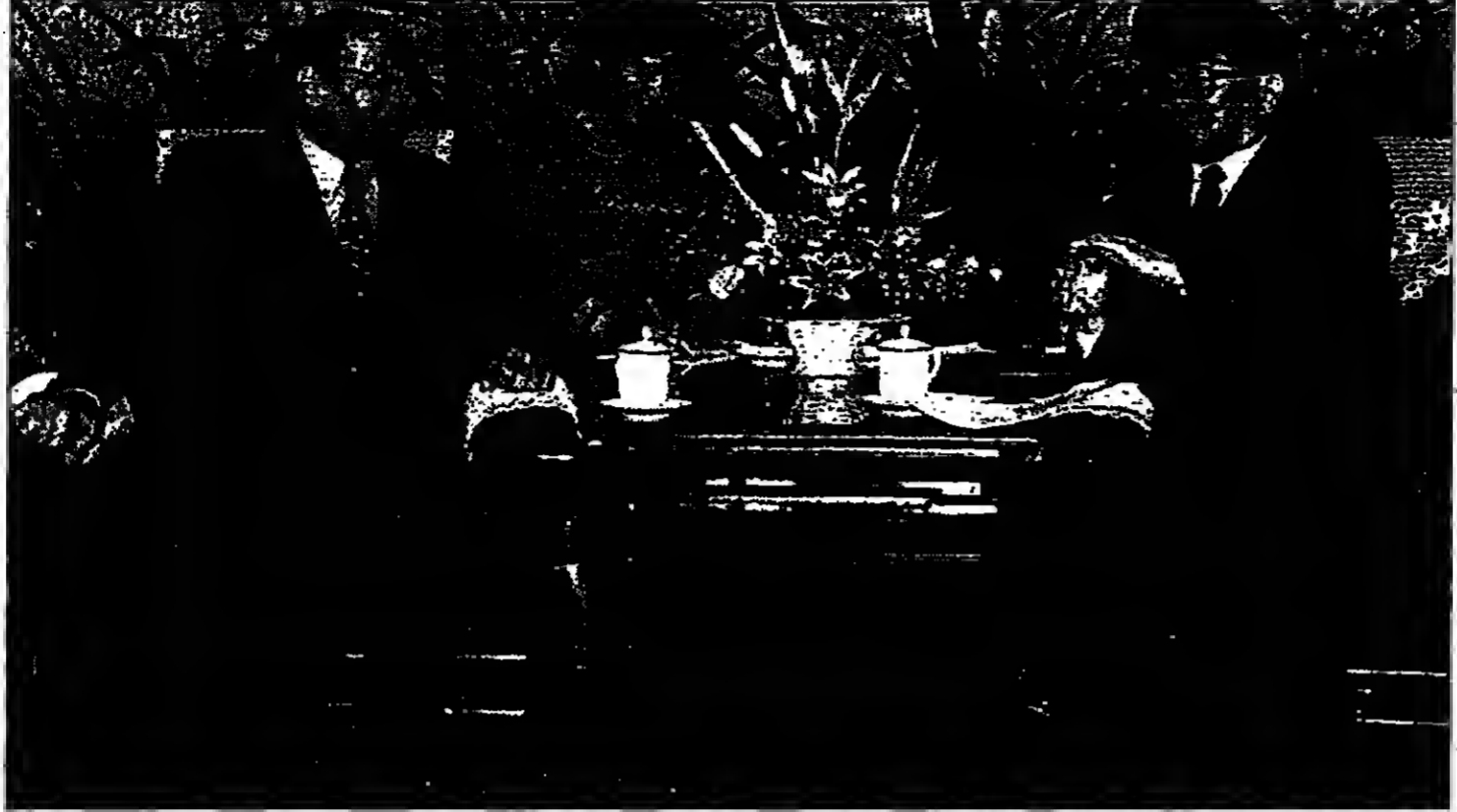
RUMORS stemming from a nun's dream that the Virgin Mary warned a terrible earthquake would take place last week has sent many in Egypt's Christian community running for cover.

"Of course I was scared. Everyone was talking about it in our building and on our street," said Narmim Khazam, a 22-year-old Coptic Christian and a university graduate. "We're waiting to see what happens."

The *Al-Akhar* daily said rumors circulated that a nun in Old Cairo dreamed that the Virgin Mary told her an earthquake would strike a quarter of Egypt's population and half of Israel's.

The rumors prompted many to take refuge in monasteries for protection, while churches held special masses, the paper said.

The head of the geophysics center in Helwan, south of Cairo, dismissed the rumors as baseless. (AP)



Syrian Prime Minister Mahmud Zohbi (left) talks with Chinese President Jiang Zemin yesterday during a visit to Zhongnanhai, the official compound of China's leaders in Beijing. The visit is the first official one to China by a Syrian premier. (Reuters)

Egypt plans a new artery of life

FOR the last 9,000 years, the Nile has been Egypt's sole artery of life. Agriculture and government were invented along its silt-nourished banks, the ancients constructed magnificent temples and awesome pyramids beside it, and the annual cycle of its rise and fall ordered the lives of pharaoh and peasant alike.

A flood depth measured at 16 cubits (a cubit was the length of an arm from fingertips to elbow) on the "Nilometer" just south of Cairo meant a year of plenty; 12 cubits meant starvation and death. As the ancient Greek historian Herodotus put it: Egypt is the Nile, and the Nile is Egypt.

But now, scientists and politicians are hoping to break that pattern. They are planning to create a second river in Egypt's Western Desert; a self-sustaining canal cutting through some of the Earth's harshest and most arid terrain that would link a series of remote oases, and would eventually extend 800 kilometers.

The project would mean that for the first time in their country's millennia-long history, Egyptians will be able to settle in large numbers someplace other than along the banks of the Nile. That place is to be called the New Valley, and President Hosni Mubarak, an enthusiastic supporter, is planning to inaugurate its construction in January. "There is no time to waste," Mubarak declared last month. "Egypt should be reshaped and prepared for the coming century."

A total of 62 million Egyptians dwell on just 4 percent of the nation's land. The rest is empty dunes and rocks used only by the few remaining desert tribes. Pro-government newspapers are calling the new river plan "Egypt's national project for the 21st century," destined to change the country's map.

Mena Iskandar, chairman of the Aswan High Dam, whose construction in the 1960s created the world's largest man-made reservoir, is a soft-spoken man who grows enthusiastic when he talks about the future. "Now, it is like what you see from the airplane in the sunlight - the green area looks like a green pencil line on the map of Egypt," he said. But in 10 or 20 years, there will be two pencil lines, or maybe a skein of green lines. "We have very good quality of soil in most of the area of Egypt," Iskandar said. "All we need is water. We have to use our share of the Nile water concretely, effectively and without any losses."

Forty years after it seized control of the Suez Canal, a quarter of

a century after completing the Aswan High Dam and 17 years after it became the first Arab country to make peace with Israel, there is a feeling among Egyptians that their country is ready to conquer new frontiers. The government is claiming victory over its home-grown Islamic extremists, economic statistics are improving, the private sector is expanding, the twin banes of the country - ignorance and poverty - are in retreat.

As if to accentuate the good news, the Nile this year produced its highest flood since the Aswan High Dam was built - the water rising to nearly 180 meters, a few meters short of what the massive barrier can safely hold.

The High Dam itself engendered much controversy when it was constructed. Critics said a steadier flow would erode the Nile's banks and ruin farmland in the Nile Delta if it was not renewed annually by the flood.

Today, experts agree that the effects of the 1.6km-wide barrier were not as severe as originally feared, and it gives Egypt a reliable year-round water supply and generates a third of the country's electricity needs.

To protect this asset, engineers took an unprecedented precaution last month. They deliberately spilled off a portion of Lake Nasser into a depression in Egypt's Western Desert, where they hope it will seep into the aquifer and feed desert wells.

In years past, a Nile flood of this year's magnitude would have meant devastation, and thousands of deaths downstream.

The working name is the New Valley Canal. The government is starting work on a tunnel and pumping station near the ancient temple site of Abu Simbel. The station, which will be one of the largest in the world, is to divert waters from the Nile, 76 meters uphill at a rate of nearly 300 cubic meters a second, to start the canal.

With Egypt's burgeoning population and problems of congestion, pollution, urbanization and housing shortages, there is no question that its people need to spread out. The country's population has doubled since the 1950s, and is expected to reach 80 million in the next 25 years. The goal is to reclaim vast areas of the desert, putting 20 to 25 percent of Egypt's land to use. "In my opinion, it is a must," said Abdel Rahman Shalaby, undersecretary for planning in the Ministry of Water Resources. "Otherwise, we will consume the land in urbanization, and then we will be looking for our food from abroad." (Los Angeles Times)

Turkish widow battles Islamist over 100 cats

SUNA ERDEM

In the backwater district of Tuzla in southeast Istanbul, an old woman is battling an assault from a local Islamist over the 100 cats she keeps at home.

"He says my cats are dirty, he says they smell," said Nezahat Ocal, 65, who has been collecting and looking after stray and unwanted cats for nearly 20 years.

She was surrounded by cats of all shapes and sizes; kittens with runny eyes, stately old cats, some coughing, some looking sickly and struggling to walk, some jumping around the furniture and climbing into pots and pans in the kitchen.

"These don't smell," Ocal said. "A ditch runs just behind his house and that smells. He plants vegetables outside his house, what does the fertilizer smell of? Roses?"

Ocal said the Islamist, known as a *haji* - one who has been on the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca - stoned three of her cats to death and, with the support of local Islamists, was trying to have the other cats removed from her house.

Islam opposes the keeping of dogs as pets, and the prophet Mohammed said angels would not go near a house with a dog in it.

There is nothing specific against cats, but Muslims believe the hairs of dogs and cats are dangerous to human health.

Ocal offered another possible motive for the feud with the *haji*. She had once taken on a married couple as lodgers, and he had complained that the widow kept a man in her house.

Islamists have made political gains recently in the strictly secular republic, partly because of public despair at the secularists' poor performance in power, and partly because of a rise in corruption and other ills, seen as Western foibles.

Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan is Turkey's first Islamist prime minister. The mayor of Istanbul and many districts are Islamist.

But animal activists say feuds such as the one between Ocal and the *haji* are not confined to Islamist-secularist rows.

People have turned to attacking neighbors they do not like through their animals ever since a court, two years ago, evicted a woman from her block of flats in Istanbul because she kept a dog, said leading animal

rights campaigner Emel Yildiz.

Apart from being evicted from flats, pets and stray animals are in danger of being poisoned by local councils during campaigns to "clean up" city streets.

"Animal rights are nonexistent in this country in the same way that human rights are nonexistent," Yildiz told Reuters, referring to Turkey's shaky human rights record that has often been the bane of its ties with the West.

Yildiz said "cleaning up" strays had become an industry, with at least two Istanbul districts contracting out the business to private companies.

This even led to the involvement of organized crime groups, who profited from diverting the expensive poisons to underground medical suppliers, Yilmaz said.

Ocal agreed that in Turkey, animals were not accorded the importance they were in the West.

"In Germany they are sold in nice shops, and I hear that in America every house has three cats," she said, wistfully.

Whatever his motives, the *haji* in Tuzla

has worked hard to "clean up" Ocal's house of cats. He recently handed a petition to Tuzla's Islamist mayor demanding that the cats be removed.

Ocal said the *haji* had collected more signatures than there were people in the neighborhood by persuading the local preacher to pass the petition round the congregation after prayers in Tuzla mosque. Council inspectors and veterinarians had visited Ocal's house in the preceding week and demanded she dispose of the cats.

As a way to seek help against the *haji* and the council, Ocal said she was trying to get in touch with a top Turkish singer who had said on television that she liked cats and wanted to help poor and sickly strays. Her efforts so far have been in vain.

The elderly woman, who began to take in strays after their family cat died alongside her husband, remains undaunted.

"This is my happiness," she said, gesturing at the adoring cats climbing over her and nudging off her glasses. "They came from the council and said I had 15 days to get rid of the cats or they would come and take them away - over my dead body!" (Reuters)

Emir of Qatar goes to Rome to meet father he ousted

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani left for Rome yesterday for a meeting with his father, the first since he ousted him in a bloodless coup in the oil and gas rich Gulf state last year, officials said.

Sheikh Hamad would spend one day in Rome, then head to Paris and London on private visits, they said.

"It is a reconciliation meeting to pave the way for the return of Sheikh Khalifa and his associ-

ates," one said.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr al-Thani, who accompanied the emir to Rome, told a news conference on Monday that Sheikh Hamad, 47, would have lunch with his father, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani, 66.

The officials said the former emir - who has been in self-imposed exile since his June 1995 ouster - would not be returning home immediately. They said discussions contin-

ued on whether about 200 of his followers - who Qatar has accused of taking part in a foiled coup plot in February - would be allowed to return as well.

"There is also the issue of about 100 of the former emir's followers detained over the plot," one diplomat said.

The former emir had denied any involvement in the plot.

Qatar said in February it had arrested 100 people in connection with an anti-government plot involving former body-

guards loyal to Sheikh Khalifa.

Sheikh Hamad earlier this month said he had had several telephone conversations with his father. The son has not publicly said why he ousted his father last year.

Qatari officials had said the former emir was expected to return following an agreement over billions of dollars missing from state coffers since his ouster. Unofficial estimates put the sum he controlled between \$3 billion and \$7 billion.

The Qatari foreign minister on Monday accused Gulf partner Bahrain of taking part in the February plot, a charge Bahrain immediately denied and condemned.

Bahrain and Qatar are locked in a dispute over a cluster of Gulf islands held by Bahrain and claimed by Doha. It boycotted a Gulf Arab summit which ended in Doha on Monday.

Last week it put two Qataris on trial on spying charges. (Reuters)

Disenchanted generation poses threat to Iran's orthodoxy

'Just Do It!' shouts red graffiti, in English, near a Teheran sidewalk, echoing an advertisement for American shoes. Along Kordestan Street there are a few more surprises: A peace symbol in black, and the spray-painting of an electric guitar.

Musical tastes in the Islamic Republic? How about the bands Ace of Base, Guns 'n' Roses, and Metallica - all scrawled along another wall.

It's another sign that, much to the chagrin of Iran's mullahs, the revolution is not a lesson learned by Iranian youth.

Despite intense indoctrination and a revolutionary government,

youth here talk more about jobs than liberty, independence, and the Islamic Republic. They chafe at the clergy's suffocating control and voice frustration over prospects of a job that goes nowhere.

With two-thirds of Iranians younger than 25, with no memory of the 1979 revolution, that discontent spells disaster.

In Egypt and other Moslem countries, that frustration is fertile ground for Islamic activists. They point to corrupt regimes, brutal police, and the misery bred by mismanaged economies and offer hope through slogans promising a moral order under God.

ANTHONY SHADID

In Iran, the youth have no ideology to articulate those frustrations. Islam here symbolizes a government that is ineffectual at best, repressive at worst.

In interview after interview, young Iranians say that they have become less religious, that politics do not matter, that making the

West so forbidden has made it even more intriguing. Running through their conversations is a streak of nihilism.

"We get nervous because we cannot do anything and we get mad. We get crazy," said Sara, an 18-year-old standing at a pizza parlor, her bleached hair falling out of her veil.

Across town in south Teheran,

inhabited by the poor who the Islamic government promised to speak for, Ali Najjar, a 27-year-old student, complained that money had become everything. He was having trouble paying for medicine his mother needed for her heart condition.

"The morals are gone and have been replaced by money." (AP)

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Down payment on reform

THE approval of an additional NIS 1.8 billion cut by a 14 to 4 vote in the cabinet on Monday was a victory for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Finance Minister Dan Meridor, and most importantly for the Israeli economy.

If this and the previously approved NIS 4.9b. cut pass the Knesset and are actually implemented, the Netanyahu government will have achieved its first major economic accomplishment. This time round, Netanyahu and Meridor seem to have remedied the lack of coordination that plagued the first fight on the budget. Just as Netanyahu and Foreign Minister David Levy realized that both gained from cooperation rather than rivalry in foreign policy, so too Netanyahu and Meridor seem to be joining forces to their mutual benefit on the domestic front.

In addition to the kudos that go to Netanyahu and Meridor for their winning teamwork, the "surprise hero" award goes to Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky for his statesmanlike initiative at the cabinet meeting. Sharansky offered to cut his own budget for the benefit of the Education Ministry. Other ministers, at Meridor's suggestion, followed Sharansky's lead. This allowed for a halving of the Education Ministry's cut, to 0.65 percent (NIS 125 million).

It is refreshing to see a minister put the interests of the country ahead of his own fiefdom. This kind of leadership will no doubt win Sharansky more respect and public support than the tired grandstanding of David and Maxim Levy.

Everyone agrees that the budget cuts should be targeted so as to minimize the impact on the weaker sectors of society. But fighting for subsidies that are mostly spent on the middle class, such as free doctor visits and child allowances, is not a serious way of helping the less well-off.

If David Levy's Geshet faction wants to act responsibly, rather than generate headlines and crises, it can propose its own specific budget cuts, while backing the overall budget target wholeheartedly. This is to effect what Netanyahu and Meridor have proposed. Each minister should decide where to make the cuts in his or her own ministry.

Of course, this novel responsibility handed to the ministers must be policed or it will be abused. The ministers must understand that if they do not choose cuts, or if the cuts are in vital areas that they know must be funded, then the government will go back to the old system of dictating from above.

Netanyahu is right when he says: "If we do not cut, without any doubt, we will pay for it in a

worsening of our situation in the financial markets. Our credit rating will sink... and we will need, of course, to cut much more than what is required if we make cuts now." The general public, according to a poll in *Ma'ariv*, agrees. Israelis support a major cut in the budget by a two-to-one margin (Yes 57% No: 25% Don't know 18%). This support is not divided along party lines: both Peres and Netanyahu voters support the cuts by practically the same margin.

The government should be able to maintain this level of support, partly because the basic division of the cuts is reasonable. The ministries have been divided into four rough categories, according to which their budgets will be cut in different degrees: security (0.5 percent cut), social (1.3%, except education, 0.65%), economic (3%), and administrative (5%). It is laudable that Netanyahu and Meridor put their own offices in the category enduring the highest cut.

The relatively low cut in the security arena is justifiable, not just because of the current troubles in the peace process. A successful peace process, as leaders of both parties have stressed, can bear a large price tag in the form of redeployment and deterrence costs. But this should not exempt the security establishment from its own internal cost-saving reforms.

The IDF could save hundreds of millions of shekels by selling off expensive property it occupies unnecessarily and by privatizing many military industries. Such privatizations have been shown in the United States to meet military needs, cut costs, and create jobs through the synergies produced by combining military and commercial production.

At the same time, these emergency budget cuts, while necessary, do not constitute real economic reform. The current batch of cuts will not change the way government does business, and will not prevent another crisis within a short time. Only a systematic reform, to which the government removes itself from economic sectors in which it does not belong, will foster long-term economic growth.

Yesterday's Waxe committee findings, which called for opening the communications industry to competition by January 1999, are a definite step in the right direction. Netanyahu, Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel, and the International Monetary Fund all agree: Israel's economy has great potential for healthy, sustained growth only if government spending is brought under control and deregulation becomes the order of the day.

'I voted against!'



Half-baked proposal

TWO former US secretaries of state recently expressed contradictory stands toward our government.

Henry Kissinger, in an analytical and well-argued piece in the *Washington Post* (reprinted in last Friday's *The Jerusalem Post*), concluded that it would be unfair to criticize Benjamin Netanyahu for not following in his predecessor's footsteps. For after all, wasn't Netanyahu voted in to give more weight to security?

In opposing vein, a censorious James Baker told a gathering of the Institute for Peace in Washington that Netanyahu must cast off his campaign rhetoric and proceed with the peace process outlined by the previous government.

Kissinger urged the US to enter into a dialogue with Israel on border adjustments crucial to Israel's security. "Israel cannot live, as no country could, with all of its major cities within mortar range of the enemy," he wrote.

Baker, on the other hand, said the US government should no longer be satisfied with a non-committal description of the settlements as "complicating the situation," but should call them an obstacle to peace.

It has generally been assumed (1) that anyone proposing adjustments to Israel's borders cannot object to settlements, which de facto draw the blueprint of a new map; and (2) anyone categorically opposed to the settlements favors freezing the current border situation.

Following this logic Baker opposes discussing the final status before all Israeli withdrawals as per the interim agreement are complete.

Kissinger's proposed channel for Israeli-US dialogue takes the outcome of our elections into

MOSHE ZAK

account; Baker's advocacy of US leverage on Israel's new government would cause the government to renege on what it promised those who voted for it.

Baker, incidentally, also seems to be hinting that Clinton should renege on promises he made to Israel on the eve of his election. Remember that tasteless remark Baker tossed at Israel:

You've got it wrong Mr. Baker: Settlements are an incentive for the Palestinians to move toward peace

"When you're ready to be serious about negotiating for peace you can call me at this number at the White House?" Baker admits in his memoirs that this stunt was the brainchild of *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman.

Few, however, now recall that on the eve of the Madrid conference Baker's demand that Israel commit itself to halting settlement hit a brick wall when prime minister Shamir refused to discuss the issue.

MANY OF us do remember that the former secretary of state caused the break-up of the national unity government with his request that it respond to "Baker's questions" on a meeting in Cairo which would have paved the way for negotiations with the PLO.

But not many knew at the time that on the eve of Madrid Baker

approached Shamir with an "alternative deal" whereby Israel would announce a halt to settlement in return for the Arab states' announcing that they would lift the Arab boycott.

The Arabs had made stopping settlement their precondition for participating in the conference and Baker wanted Israel's help on this.

The Arabs didn't get what they wanted, and it didn't thwart the peace process that began at Madrid.

In the event, when the Palestinians threatened to boycott the conference Baker told Hanan Ashrawi: If you don't come, the number of settlements will multiply.

The prospect of additional "facts on the ground" actually served to accelerate those negotiations; without it looming over the Palestinians the Oslo agreement would not likely have become reality.

Even the negotiations on Hebron would have gone quicker had the other side feared that a delay could boost settlement activity.

But what Netanyahu did was voice uncertainty about new settlements and say there wasn't a budget for them anyway. This relieved the PLO of any sense of needing to wind up the negotiations speedily.

Many Arab deliberations on the conflict with Israel advocate a quick solution in the interests of preventing the "Israelization" of the West Bank.

Baker's recommendation that the Clinton administration pressure Israel to promise it will not build more houses in Judea and Samaria is thus actually tantamount to dismantling the engine of the peace train.

The writer, a veteran journalist, comments on current affairs.

Special people

ANN HUTCHINGS

GROWING up in Oklahoma I never had the opportunity to know any Jews. In spite of this my Christian parents made sure I received a very pro-Jewish, pro-Israel upbringing.

They taught me that although the US was a great nation by virtue of its tradition of democracy and freedom of religion, Israel was in a special class all by itself. Israel was the greatest nation in the world. Israel had the greatest army in the world, and Jews were the most special people in the world.

My father's religious organization distributed material from the Israeli government on secure borders and the IDF. God's judgment, he said, would surely fall on America if we ever stopped supporting Israel.

And heaven forbid if you did anything against any Jew; God would be sure to get you!

I never once heard my parents say one antisemitic word. They felt that you couldn't consider someone a Christian if they were antisemitic. To this day my father will cut off all communication with any "Christian" he discovers is antisemitic or denies the Holocaust.

I never heard the stories about Michaelangelo's Moses or about Jews using the blood of Christian children to bake matza. I thought all Christians were raised like me.

My first encounter with anti-Semitism came when I was 21, and I occurred in a Christian Bible study group.

One of the men made a very anti-Israel, anti-Jewish statement at the end of the Bible study session.

I couldn't let it pass; I had to let him know that not everyone

God's judgment, my father said, would surely fall on America if it ever abandoned Israel

agreed with him. He devoted the rest of the evening to a personal attack on me for my pro-Israel stand.

This man is an aberration, I thought as I left. He surely is not representative of most Christians.

A YEAR after I arrived to Israel I met a woman called Talia. We became fast friends.

One day she quietly told me about when she was 12 and living in Bethesda, Maryland. A family with two girls from North Carolina had moved into their apartment complex for the summer.

The girls all rode their bikes together and listened to Michael Jackson. One day the subject of religion came up, and Talia and her sister told their new friends they were Jews.

Next day they asked, "Where are your horns?" I was shocked, horrified, and ashamed. I had never heard anything like this. Could Talia want to be my friend after something like this? I felt I had to apologize to her.

She told me other stories about how Jews are said to use Jesus's blood to make matza for Passah, about how Jews kill Christian children and drink their blood. No wonder so many Jews are hostile toward Christians, I thought.

Most Christians today have very little connection with Jews. They know nothing of the uniqueness and richness of Jewish culture, tradition and religion. Most of them are ignorant of the history of Jewish-Christian relations through the centuries.

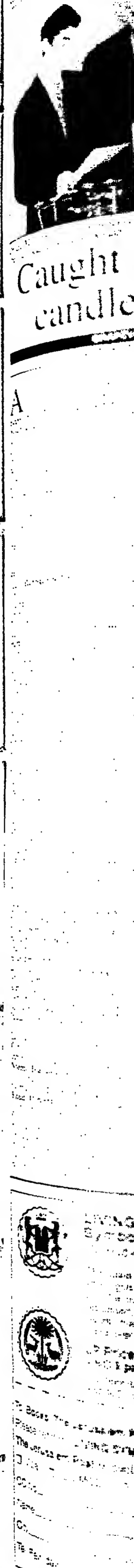
A Christian growing up in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, or Trion, Minnesota, has absolutely no idea of how almost 2,000 years of persecution and then the Holocaust on top of everything else have impacted on Jews and the Jewish community. All he or she knows is "Jesus has been good for us, so why can't he be good for the Jews too?"

Christians honestly can't understand why many Jews today view them no differently from those who tortured Jews during the Spanish Inquisition or those who tried to eliminate the Jewish race in the death camps of Auschwitz and Theresienstadt.

Nothing I can do can change the past, much as I desperately want it to. No one can bring six million Jews back from the grave.

But Christians and Jews working together to promote understanding and closer ties can help ensure a future free from pogroms, and persecution. Only in this way can we end anti-Semitism once and for all.

The writer, a journalist, lives in Jerusalem.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UNHOLY ALLIANCE

Sir, - Stanley Levin (Letters, November 28) does not understand when he argues that, since secular representatives are accepted on the Religious Council of Jerusalem, why should Conservative and Reform representatives not be accepted. The Orthodox don't mind secularists, who do not compete with them in the interpretation and application of Jewish values and law. But they are deathly afraid of non-Orthodox interpretations and applications of Jewish law, even if these interpretations and applications are in the spirit of the historical Halacha.

There is an unholy alliance between the secularists and Orthodox which dictates that total adherence to Orthodoxy and total denial of religion are OK, but any attempt to deal with Halacha on its own terms of flexibility is taboo. Therefore, total secularists are acceptable on the religious councils, but non-Orthodox representatives are not.

RABBI JACOB CHINITZ
Jerusalem.

NO CONTRIBUTION

Sir, - With all due and proper respect to the position and erudition of the former chief rabbi of the British Commonwealth, his essay in *The Jerusalem Post* of November 29 made no contribution to the public debate concerning Israel's morality and politics. What, for example, are we to make of the statement that "the peace process is irreversible and that concessions compatible with security will be made over the land, including Jerusalem, which will retain its status as Israel's undivided capital." Aside from the

RIDICULOUS

Sir, - Looking through recent issues of *The Jerusalem Post*, my eyes caught a glimpse of the Mazda Tours advertisement. This ad entices Israelis to travel to Jordan and Egypt amongst other places. This, by itself, is enough to raise eyebrows in view of little or no tourism in Israel's direction from the above-mentioned countries.

I was convinced from conversations with Israelis, during 15 trips to Israel, that, on an individual level, most of the

internal contradiction in this statement, what does it mean in the light of Arafat's insistence that the establishment of a PLO state with Jerusalem as its capital is a sine qua non for peace? Nor does the learned rabbi's accusation that "many religious Jews are more concerned with the quantity of land under Jewish control than the quality of Jewish life" manifest a familiarity with the overwhelming majority in the religious Zionist camp and its leadership.

JAY SHAPIRO
Ginot Shomron.

ADL TAKES A BACK SEAT

ADL has always supported the democratically-elected government of the State of Israel, be it Likud or Labor. This consistent policy is based on our respect for the integrity of the Israeli political process.

As an American Jewish organization we believe it would be inappropriate for us publicly to question Israeli policy since we do not live in Israel and participate in its democratic process; nor are we the ones who must live with the effects of government policy.

At the same time this policy does not preclude us from hearing different perspectives on the peace process, Israeli politics or US-Israel relations.

Whatever our organizational position we believe it is important to promote an informed discussion on these serious issues by providing the community with a spectrum of opinion.

Indeed, by hearing from responsible experts on the Left and the

No to informal censorship

ABRAHAM H. FOXMAN

IMAGINE a world where we in the Jewish community are prohibited from hearing diverse perspectives on issues of concern; a world where opinions on Israel and the Middle East, church-state issues or Black-Jewish relations require a *hechsher* or stamp of approval by community leaders before they can be shared with Jewish audiences; a world where only academics, journalists or politicians deemed politically correct are welcome to speak at Jewish community events.

That world may be closer than we think.

In recent weeks the Zionist Organization of America has mounted a campaign against the Anti-Defamation League for hosting Pulitzer prize-winning *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman as a speaker at an agency event.

ADL, the ZOA declares, is providing a platform to a "hostile critic" of Israel, a journalist who "defames" the Jewish state.

Let's put this misguided controversy into perspective.

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Indeed, by hearing from responsible experts on the Left and the

Right, religious and secular, members of the government and the opposition, the Jewish community becomes more educated, more interested and more involved in the issues of the day.

To that end, we invited Thomas Friedman, whom we consider to be a responsible, knowledgeable and incisive commentator on Israel and the Middle East, to address an ADL event.

While we do not always agree with Friedman's positions regarding the region, we believe his opinions are

In calling on ADL to cancel its invitation to columnist Thomas Friedman, the ZOA opinion police insult American Jews

always expressed within the context of support for Israel.

ADL TAKES A BACK SEAT to no one in fighting the enemies of the Jewish people and the State of Israel. We regularly go to bat against columnists and editorial writers who consistently demonstrate an anti-Israel bias through the questioning of Israel's right to exist, the justification of the use of terrorism or violence and an unfailing reliance on a double standard when it comes to Israeli policy and history.

We understand that there are some who may disagree with Friedman's opinions - but let's be realistic, Thomas Friedman is not an anti-Israel extremist.

In its opposition to Friedman ZOA is not defending the American Jewish community from a malicious adversary but trying to prevent us from hearing a legitimate opinion.

The writer is National Director of the Anti-Defamation League.

מכון לחקר



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is ably assisted in lighting the Hanukkiya by Daniel Khalil. (Nahum Slepak)

Caught out by candlelight

GRAPEVINE
GREER FAY CASHMAN

AS WAS pointed out earlier in the week by *The Jerusalem Post's* Judy Siegel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had the candle in the wrong end of the Hanukkiya when celebrating the first night of Hanukka with his family. To be fair, it may well have been his aides who were at fault when setting up the photo opportunity. Another Hanukka faux pas was foisted on him later in the evening at the Israel Museum when he was handed a spare candle with which to kindle both the first light and the *shamash*. He had no option but to blow out the spare.

FRIENDS AND acquaintances of author Barbara Sofer who looked forward to acquiring an autographed copy of the prolific writer's latest book, *The Thirteenth Hour*, at the book launch hosted by Deborah Harris, who is one of her agents, were disappointed. The author was there, but the books were still in New Jersey.

Talking about her research, Sofer said that when studying the world of explosives, she went to the National Library and also consulted a cousin on kibbutz who happens to be an explosives expert. "They look at you funny when you ask for books on explosives at the National Library," she noted. "They're locked up in the basement. Not everyone can get them."

As for her cousin on kibbutz, they were already engaged in conversation when the carpenter arrived and went into the bedroom to do a repair job. They suddenly became aware of an ominous silence on the other side of the door, and then the carpenter came bolting out, presumably to report them to the authorities.

CURRENTLY working on a new novel, the details of which she is not at liberty to discuss, Sofer has produced three books in under a year. In addition to *The Thirteenth Hour* there were also *Shalom Haver* and *Kids Love Israel*. Beth Elon, who is Harris's partner in a writers' agency, also writes books of her own, and is on the verge of coming out with a new cookbook about Italian cuisine in the Israeli kitchen.

LEADERS OF Jerusalem's Christian and Jewish communities came together last week to honor Naomi Teasdale, who served as long time Christian Affairs adviser to mayors Teddy Kallek and Ehdn Olmert. At a reception sponsored by the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, Kallek reminisced about the knowledge, tolerance and sensitivity which Teasdale showed for over three dozen Christian communities which came under the

auspices of the Jerusalem municipality following the city's reunification in 1967. Teasdale for her part referred to Kallek's intolerance. "I admire you for your intolerance of stupidity, of bigotry and of pomposity," she declared.

US CONSUL General in Jerusalem Edward Abington was the keynote speaker at the Beersheba graduation ceremony for 75 recipients of Boston University International Graduate Center's Master of Science degrees in management. He was particularly proud of one of the graduates, a fellow US diplomat who also happens to be his wife, Carol Abington. Prior to being posted to Israel four years ago, the distaff member of the Abington family, who worked as a diplomat here from 1982 to 1984, had not considered BU for her master's degree, but with a home-away-from-home opportunity for post-graduate studies, she decided to take the plunge, and has now been recruited to an executive position at Jerusalem Global, a marketing consultancy based in the capital.

PRIME MINISTER Netanyahu's stock went up in the US last Friday when ABC's Barbara Walters named him as one of the 10 most fascinating people of the year.

CHANNEL 1 anchorman Menashe Raz, discussing the possibility of a national unity government with Jewish Agency chairman and former Labor MK Avraham Burg commented that one has to know whom one is going to marry in case one later has to get divorced. Considering that Raz has been through both experiences, it was an intriguing analogy.

THE ON-AGAIN, off-again romance between super model Claudia Schiffer and super magician David Copperfield seems to be on again. The two were seen together at the wind-up of his Broadway season.

GUESS WHO's coming to dinner? If it's at the home of Sharon Stone, the VIP guest is probably Kevin Costner. The two, whose numerous romantic liaisons have long been making Hollywood headlines, are celluloid city's latest hot item.

DON'T DO as mother does, but do as mother says. That's going to be the rule in the household of recent celebrity mom Madonna who has announced that her infant daughter will be given a strict Catholic education and will not be allowed to watch television. Just as well. We wouldn't want her to get the wrong impression of Mama.

HAIM SHAPIRO

The resolution of the Southern Baptist Convention targeting the Jews for missionary activity is still ringing in the ears of those of us who are concerned with the future of the Jewish people. That is why it was so heartening to speak recently to two American Christian ministers, both of whose devotion to the text of the Bible is no less fervent than that of the Southern Baptists, who are firm and outspoken in their rejection of proselytism directed at Jews.

In style and even theology, the two men could not be more different. Pastor Ken Rawson of Bible Students Congregation in New Brunswick, New Jersey, is soft-spoken and understated, while Pastor John Hagee of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, tends toward the dramatic.

Rawson, who was visiting with a group of 50 ministers and leaders of his church, says the Bible Students are a small denomination, but that they exist worldwide. The 19th-century founders of his church always had good relations with Jewish leaders, preceded Herzl in promoting a Zionist message, and not only do they eschew proselytism to the Jews, they believe that God has a dual covenant - with Jews as well as Christians.

"The destiny of the Jewish people is in the hands of God. It is not the business of Christians," Rawson says.

Rawson's personal decision to begin a campaign for Jews to remain true to their Judaism came about as a result of growing anti-Semitism, the message of Holocaust revisionist historians, increased Israel bashing, the voluntary assimilation of Jews, and assimilation which came about as a result of Christian missionary activity.

As a result, Rawson produced *Israel, Appointment with Destiny*, a video program aimed at strengthening Jewish identity. Produced with the cooperation of Jewish organizations and Israeli government bodies, the program has been shown in synagogues belonging to all the Jewish reli-

For the love of Zion



Pastor Ken Rawson: The destiny of the Jewish people is in the hands of God. It is not the business of Christians. (Brian Hendler)



Pastor John Hagee: The Jewish people gave to Christianity the patriarchs and the prophets and the word of God. (Israel News and Media)

gious streams in the US. A Russian version is distributed by Shamir, the Habad-affiliated organization of religious immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

The program, says Rawson, is aimed at countering missionaries who spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to target Jews. As a Christian minister, Rawson says, he often receives appeals from missionary groups, including the Hear O Israel Ministries, which two years ago held mass missionary rallies, billed as Jewish folk festivals, in cities throughout Russia.

"They donate large sums of money to hospitals and other local institutions and then they get the backing of the mayor and other local officials," Rawson says.

Although Rawson is highly critical of evangelical Christians who, he says, target Jews for conversion, he appears to have similar, if not identical, views to the pro-

Israel evangelicals regarding Jewish rights to the land of Israel. "I feel very that Israel should keep this land. It belongs to them," he says. He himself took his group to Hebron, he says.

However, he adds, God doesn't coerce the will of the Jewish people, if they want to give up the land. For his part, he believes that Christian Zionists must begin an outreach program to Jews to help them have faith in God and faith in the Torah. Then, he says, the Jews will become united over the land of Israel.

Hagee is the senior pastor of the Cornerstone Church, a non-denominational evangelical congregation with some 16,000 members. Though soft-spoken and understated for a TV evangelist, he is nevertheless an imposing figure. He appears on television, nationwide, twice a day and all day on Sunday. The program

appears, he is eager to tell you, on four networks, with 110 TV stations, and his program is also broadcast on 95 radio stations.

His support for Israel is manifested in his messages - which often relate to the Jewish state, and fundraising. He has raised over \$200,000 for local hospitals, such as Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem and Laniado Hospital in Netanya. It is a support, he says, which is born of the debt owed to Judaism by Christianity.

"Without Judaism, there would be no Christianity. The Jewish people gave to Christianity the patriarchs and the prophets and the word of God," he says.

The state of Israel, he says, is the greatest of prophetic miracles of the 20th century. Although he is critical of an agreement with the PLO, he says that he does not want to interfere in Israeli political decisions. Israel and the Jewish people

must live with their decisions and he and his followers will support them, he says.

However, he adds, as a Christian Zionist, he believes that "Jerusalem should be under Jewish control until the messiah returns."

Hagee flatly denies that he has any hidden agenda for the Jewish people. In answer to the argument by Southern Baptists and others, that a true Christian must spread the gospel to everyone, Hagee says that anyone is free to respond, but he does not target Jewish groups for conversion, as some other Christian groups do.

Attesting to Hagee's credentials is Rabbi Arye Scheinberg of Congregation Rodfei Shalom of San Antonio, who commented that "Pastor Hagee's friendship for Israel and the Jewish community takes a lot of courage."

Fatigue strikes at the American male

HEY, you men out there. Are you yawning? Do you find it hard to get going in the morning? Are you falling asleep while reading the children's bedtime stories?

Take heart. You are not alone. A recent study on the problem of fatigue found that American men are reporting they feel more tired than their forebears did 50 years ago.

Donald L. Bliwise, director of the Sleep Disorders Center at Atlanta's Emory University Medical School, compared how people in the 1980s answered questions about fatigue and sleep on a mental-health questionnaire to how people answered the questions in the 1930s.

The same questionnaire, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, was given to 539 people in the early 1930s and to 1,408 others in the early 1980s.

Bliwise found that 26.3 percent of the 1980s men said they felt unrested in the morning, compared with only 17.9 percent in the 1930s. A greater percentage of modern men (33 percent) also reported being more tired and having less stamina in the daytime than men did in the earlier era, when only 19.7 percent said so.

There was no significant difference, however, between the two groups when asked about sleep disturbances. So, how to explain

the apparent increase in tired men?

Bliwise, whose survey was published in a recent issue of *Sleep*, a journal of the American Sleep Disorders Association and the Sleep Research Society, proffered a number of possible explanations.

It may be that men are sleeping less these days, Bliwise said, noting a 1993 report by NIH's National Commission on Sleep Disorders Research showing that Americans in general are neglecting sleep in today's society.

On the other hand, the greater fatigue of 1980s men might be due to an increase in the number of people suffering from depression, Bliwise wrote. Then again, it may be that men are simply more willing to admit being tired than their earlier counterparts were.

The latter explanation is boosted by another finding of Bliwise's study: While only 42.2 percent of men in the 1930s said they dreamed, 63.6 percent of contemporary men said they did. This, wrote Bliwise, suggests that today's men are more open to emotional experiences than men of 50 years ago.

Of course, Bliwise stressed in an interview, "that's just speculation." (Washington Post)

How to wean a two-year-old

I have a two-year-old child who still nurses. Until now, I was very happy to breast-feed him, but I think it is about time to stop. My problem is that the baby cries nonstop and pulls at me if I refuse to nurse him. Eventually, I give in. Do you know of any suggestions for peacefully weaning a two-year-old child?

Deborah Schesch-Wernick, area professional liaison for *La Leche League*, responds:

It seems from your letter that you have really enjoyed your nursing experience. Until now, it's been going well. But now something is telling you that it's not OK to nurse longer than two years. I don't know if this is a feeling inside you or external pressure from people or society standards. Based on what you write, though, your child seems to want to continue the special breast-feeding relationship. It seems that the more you try to end, the more he fights to continue. The stress inside you grows, as does the conflict between you and your child.

It's OK to nurse a two-year-old. These children, despite being "big," still often need assurance that all is well, and they need calming when they are upset. Some children, such as yours, fill this need by con-

PARENTING

RUTH MASON

continuing the breast-feeding relationship. Some suck a thumb or a pacifier, hug a stuffed bear, or drink from a bottle.

Many mothers just let the breast-feeding relationship end peacefully by itself at whatever age. Those who are nursing a one- or two-year-old and want to end sooner, can gradually and gently encourage this older nurse to miss feeds. One way is to postpone breast-feeding until mother and child are relaxed and will enjoy breast-feeding more. Another is to replace a comfort-feed with a special activity such as reading a story

together while cuddling in a rocking chair.

If a mother can anticipate when her child will want to nurse, she can use these substitutes before a crisis develops. If the child is hungry at a certain time of day, she can make food available before he asks to nurse.

The last nursings to go are usually before breakfast and at bedtime. Jumping out of bed right away and putting breakfast in front of the little one before a struggle starts often avoids the morning nursing. Having the father or another put the little one to bed helps him to pass up the evening nursing. Patience and love help a child grow and mature in the best way.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Wednesday, December 11, 1996

Kaul: Gov't erred by not charging for tenders

JUDY SIEGEL

OUTGOING Bezeq director-general Yitzhak Kaul said yesterday it was a significant error for the government not to have charged cellular phone and overseas dialing companies a large sum for their Communications Ministry tenders.

Kaul told *The Jerusalem Post* "the government could have demanded, say, \$200 million from each of the companies that won the tenders. Instead, the ministry's main criterion in selecting the winners was who could offer the lowest prices to consumers." The tenders were won by Cellcom, Pelephone, Barak and Kavei Zahav.

In a few months, Kaul will take over as managing director of Clal.

Kaul said that in today's budget squeeze \$800m. would have greatly eased the Treasury's financial problems. "While charges for cellular-phone airtime and overseas calls would initially have been higher, after a while competition among the various companies would have brought prices down."

But, Kaul said, "all cellular phone users are addicted to this service and airtime charges by Cellcom are about to double - although they remain lower than those of Pelephone."

Communications Ministry director-general Shlomo Waxe said the ministry's aim was to promote competition and benefit the public. "If each winner had been charged \$200 million, the public would have paid for this in the end," Waxe said.

Open communications industry by 1999 - panel

DAVID HARRIS

THE communications industry should be opened to competition by January 1999, according to the Waxe committee, which published its findings yesterday.

Communications Minister Limor Livnat and Finance Minister Dan Meridor have both approved the proposals of the three-man committee, which include granting new licenses, opening to competition internal phone services, and opening television and cable to competition.

The recommendations are expected to be presented at Friday's cabinet meeting. Subject to approval then, an inter-ministerial team will begin working next week on the detailed implementation of the program.

The committee was set up by the Labor government in January and originally comprised the director-generals of the Communications Ministry, Shlomo Waxe, and of the Treasury, David Brodet. Since the elections, Prime Minister's Office deputy director-general, Moshe Leon, was added to the committee.

The main recommendations include: "The opening of the communications industry to competition no later than January 1999. Livnat said she would prefer this to happen during 1998, when the European and US industries go through the same process."

"Internal services to be opened up will be in the spheres of telephones, infrastructure and transmission. New licenses will be granted in these areas. Those successful will be able to operate throughout the country."

"The process will be implemented through tenders and/or licenses granted to those with experience in the relevant fields."



Finance Minister Dan Meridor (from left), Treasury director-general David Brodet, and Communications Minister Limor Livnat release the Waxe committee findings yesterday. (Zohar Hadler)

"The advertising process should start before the end of the current calendar year."

"There must be a rethink of supervision, with an organization such as UK regulator OfTel being a possible model."

"To open the television and cable area to competition following the expiry of existing licenses."

"Further governmental study must be undertaken into the laws of com-

petition, the future operation of Bezeq, and the needs of the military. Interest in Israel's communications sector is unprecedented, according to the committee members. "There is currently more international interest in Israel's communications industry than in that of anyone else," said Meridor. "This is one of the most important reforms in the country's economy."

While the committee was publicizing its report, Bezeq workers throughout the country were staging a one-hour strike against what

they called Livnat's intention to privatize local calls.

Responding, Livnat said the moves will create additional jobs. "All these worries are understandable, and we are sensitive to them," she said.

The private sector must be left to run business, said the minister. The government should not be involved in any aspect of the management. The Communications Ministry "along with several other economic ministries" should become merely a small headquarters, Livnat said.

Bank Discount forecasts 2.5%-3% GDP rise in '97

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

GROSS Domestic Product is expected to increase between 2.5 percent and 3% next year, significantly lower than its 5% potential growth rate, Bank Discount said in an economic survey published yesterday.

The forecast comes a day after the Central Bureau of Statistics announced a relatively low 3% growth rate in the third quarter of this year. GDP is the total value of goods and services in the economy, plus foreign business operations within the confines of the country.

According to the bank, GDP per capita is expected to remain virtually unchanged next year, compared to a 2.5% annual increase in the 1990-1995 period.

The bank said the expected slowdown in productivity, which started this year, is primarily due to problems of supply, resulting from the drop in export profits.

In the July to October period, there was no acceleration in economic activity, in contrast to some recent optimistic economic forecasts. According to the bank's economists, the slowdown will continue as long as the factors

which led to the drop in activity remain unresolved.

"The actual loss in productivity in 1996 in addition to the forecast addition in 1997 resulting from the slowdown in growth below the potential rate is estimated at NIS 9 billion," said the bank.

In the report, the bank said export of goods and services will reach only 4% this year. This is mainly due to the slowdown in earnings from exports during the last three years.

The bank said the devaluation in the shekel against the basket of currencies and the dollar since October and the expected increase in indirect taxes at the start of 1997 will contribute to a rise in inflation in coming months, despite the slip in economic activity.

The most likely scenario, said the bank, is an "accumulated devaluation of 9-10% in the shekel currency rate against the basket of currencies during the next 12 months. The acceleration of the devaluation rate will influence the Consumer Price Index, which is expected to increase 10%-11% in the next 10 months."

Upgraded Marom road system unveiled

RAINE MARCUS

IN its contribution to the war on traffic offenders and accidents, the Driver Safety Systems company yesterday showed Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy its new, upgraded Marom system, which measures drivers' speed and the distance between cars.

Managing-director Shmuel Kedmi said DSS signed a \$3 million deal with France's Sagem, which intends to sell Marom to the French police. The company also is negotiating with the Dutch police.

Israeli police use seven such systems, which photograph and digitally record the speed of vehicles and the distance between cars. The results, according to Kedmi, are accurate, since they leave no room for human error and are computerized.

"We see this product as a mission in the war against road accidents," said Kedmi. "Several victims of road accidents are amongst our employees who wish to work with us to promote road safety after their own experiences." According to Kedmi, Israeli police has bought \$500,000 of equipment in the last three months and the company is also marketing in Argentina and other South American countries.

Carmel seeks stake in Barkan Carpets

Jerusalem Post Staff

CARMEL Carpets, controlled by the Etani family, yesterday announced it is in advanced negotiations to purchase 50 percent of Barkan Carpets.

Barkan is the largest wall-to-wall carpet manufacturer in the

country. The company employs 40 workers and exports to England, Holland and Spain. Barkan expects to end 1996 with revenues of about NIS 20m.

Aviv Etani, one of Carmel Carpets' owners, said Barkan will remain an independent entity after the purchase. Following the sale, Barkan carpets will be available in Carmel Carpets and Beitli stores, also owned by the Etani family.

Etani said the purchase is expected to help Barkan increase its local market sales and also help the company enter new overseas markets. Carmel currently exports to Japan, the US and Europe.

The Etani family purchased Carmel Carpets about two years ago from the receiver. The company was previously owned by the Shapira family. Since the purchase, Carmel Carpets has been operating at full capacity.

Trade deficit shrinking since May

Jerusalem Post Staff

THE trade deficit expanded \$500 million last month, bringing the 11-month total to \$9.6 billion, compared with \$9.2b. in the same period last year, the Central Bureau of Statistics announced yesterday.

Imports in November reached \$2.2b., with exports standing at \$1.7b. Diamonds comprised 28 percent of all imports, and 29% of exports.

From May to November,

imports (excluding diamonds and fuel) dropped by some 0.66% a month, compared with the same period in 1995. This followed a relatively stable four months.

Exports increased between May and November by a monthly 0.7%, after increases of 0.33% in the first four months of the year.

As a result of these developments in recent months, the deficit

has begun shrinking by 2% to 3% a month.

The trade deficit has been fed, among other things, by increased public consumption, partly from increased government spending that expanded many wage earners' disposable income.

Savings plans hit by redemptions

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

BANK index-linked saving plans were hit by redemptions in November for the first time since the start of the year, the Treasury reported yesterday.

The index-linked plans registered withdrawals of NIS 33 million in November compared to deposits of NIS 343m. the previous month and deposits of NIS 2.96 billion in September.

Since the start of the year the public has withdrawn money from

provident funds to invest in saving plans, on the assumption they offered higher yields than the funds. Analysts said the change in trend reflected the public's renewed confidence in the funds. In recent months the funds have announced improved yields.

Provident funds continued to suffer withdrawals last month, but at a lower rate. Net withdrawals from the funds reached NIS 382m. compared to NIS 1.06b. in October and NIS 3.65b. in September.

The provident funds' total withdrawals since the start of the year is NIS 12.33b.

Since the start of the year, saving plans have accumulated NIS 5.2b. Foreign-currency linked plans registered withdrawals of NIS 169m. in November compared to NIS 108.5m. in the previous month.

Training funds attracted deposits of NIS 54m. last month compared to NIS 49m. in October.

ISRAEL MONEY MARKETS

Currency (deposit for)	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS
U.S. dollar (\$250,000)	4.750	5.000	5.375
French franc (€100,000)	6.525	4.200	4.250
German mark (DM 200,000)	1.825	1.825	2.125
Swiss franc (SF 200,000)	0.825	0.750	1.000
Yen (10 million yen)			

(Rates vary higher or lower than indicated according to deposit)

Shekel Foreign Exchange Rates* (10.12.96)

Currency basket	CHECKS AND TRANSFERS		BANKNOTES		Rep. Rate**
	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell	
U.S. dollar	3.8222	3.8146	3.20	3.37	3.8220
German mark	2.0988	2.1327	2.08	2.17	2.1120
French franc	5.9984	6.4804	5.30	5.68	6.4248
Japanese yen (100)	0.5208	0.5510	0.51	0.54	0.5248
Dutch florin	2.6798	2.6983	2.83	2.87	2.8648
Swiss franc	1.5710	1.6012	1.83	1.88	1.8857
Swedish krona	2.4586	2.4882	2.41	2.54	2.4751
Norwegian krona	0.4785	0.4842	0.48	0.50	0.4802
Denish krona	0.5484	0.5573	0.53	0.57	0.5508
Finland mark	0.7015	0.7129	0.68	0.73	0.7083
Canadian dollar	2.4067	2.4478	2.38	2.49	2.4224
Australian dollar	2.8235	2.8514	2.58	2.69	2.8241
S. African rand	0.8957	0.9070	0.83	0.87	0.8702
Belgian franc (10)	1.0182	1.0347	1.00	1.05	1.0247
Austrian schilling (10)	2.9531	3.0918	2.83	3.08	3.0222
Italian lira (1000)	2.1335	2.1680	2.08	2.20	2.1488
Jordanian dinar	4.5400	4.6900	4.54	4.85	4.6278
Egyptian pound	0.8900	1.0100	0.83	1.01	1.0374
ECU	5.4971	4.1182	—	—	4.0781
Irish punt	4.8900	5.4844	5.81	6.58	6.4917
Spanish peseta (100)	2.4945	2.5348	2.45	2.57	2.5108

*These rates vary according to bank. **Bank of Israel. SOURCE: BANK LEUMI

Third Way unveils alternative budget

DAVID HARRIS

COALITION partner the Third Way published an alternative 1997 budget proposal with a NIS 7 billion to NIS 8b. cut, a 1 percent VAT hike, and a cut in interest rates of 3% to 4%.

The details of the package were presented to Finance Minister Dan Meridor just hours after the government agreed to an additional NIS 1.8 billion cut in the 1997 budget. The contents also were discussed with coalition MKs yesterday.

The 12-point plan would end the slowdown in economic growth, the freeze in stock market activity, the budget and balance of payment deficits, and the general pessimistic feeling in the economy, the Third Way said.

Existing government proposals have certain disadvantages, according to the party, including attacking social welfare, immigration and infrastructure development budgets.

The Third Way's proposals include:

- Cutting NIS 7b. to NIS 8b. from the national budget.
- Reducing interest rates by 3% to 4%, which would create a much better environment for the mortgage market.
- A NIS 2b. cut in aid to employers for national insurance contributions. This would be possible after the interest-rate cut and alteration of the exchange rate.
- A 9% reduction in the number of government employees by 2001.
- The guarantee that cuts in the Labor and Social Affairs, Construction and Housing, Health, and Education Ministry budgets would not affect those earning less than the national average wage.
- VAT to increase 1% to 18%.
- The additional cut will not come from the defense budget.
- Permission for pension funds to invest larger sums in the capital markets.
- The granting of money through capital-investment aid to take into account the number of jobs created as a result of an individual investment.
- A 10% tax on the employment of foreign workers.

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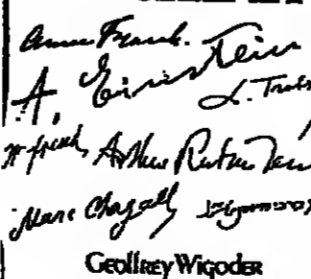
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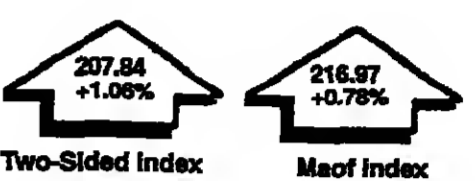
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Shares rise on US gains, budget cuts

TEL AVIV STOCK MARKET



SHARES closed higher yesterday in active trading following the rise of Wall Street and the cabinet's approval of a second round of budget cuts.

Eurobourses, London nears all-time high

LONDON (Reuters) - Shares finished mostly higher, underpinned by a firm gilt market, to end with a striking distance of all-time highs.

US stocks mixed as investors take profits

NEW YORK (AP) - Stocks ended mixed yesterday as investors secured some profits on a follow-through to Monday's rally.

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CURRENCY CROSS RATES

Table of currency cross rates for Mark, Sterling, Yen, Sfr, and Ffr.

Patient goes berserk, kills woman by pulling plug

A 35-YEAR-OLD recent immigrant hospitalized for a neurological problem in Beersheba's Soroka Hospital suddenly ran amok late Monday night, and pulled out the breathing tube of a critically ill elderly woman, cutting off her oxygen supply for a few minutes and causing her death 40 minutes later. The unprecedented incident is being investigated by the police and an internal hospital committee.

Esther Altias, 74, a Beersheba resident, was unconscious and attached to a respirator after suffering from a stroke. Three nurses and a doctor were on duty in the department when Igor Lissiakov went berserk. Before managing to pull out the woman's trachea tube, he pulled out a second patient's infusion.

19-year-old Idan Harel, who was visiting his grandmother in the same ward room, prevented Lissiakov from causing further damage and screamed for help. "It was like a horror movie. He went wild; his whole body shook."

JUDY SIEGEL

He came into the room, disconnected one woman's infusion and then the other woman's breathing tube. I pushed him but I couldn't stop him.

His calls for help alerted the nurses and security staff, who tied Lissiakov to the bed and ran to Altias to give her oxygen and reattach the breathing tube. But the staff's efforts to save Altias, who had already been in critical condition, failed.

Lissiakov was given sedation and returned to his hospital bed, with a police guard stationed next to him.

Hospital director Dr. Yitzhak Peterburg said the staff were shocked by the tragedy. "Half an hour before the rampage, Lissiakov was checked and found to be calm. A new immigrant who had arrived in the country only a few weeks ago, he had no history of mental illness, and was not being treated for an emotional illness."

During the attack, Lissiakov - who had been hospitalized in an adjacent room and had no previous contact with the three women - didn't utter a word. He carried no weapons and was not under the influence of alcohol, said Peterburg, but was confused and acted with much violence.

Hospital management said its security system is meant to prevent unwanted strangers from entering the departments. "But we cannot personally watch each and every one of our 1,000 patients at all times. We reported the regrettable incident immediately to the police, Kupat Holim Clalit [which owns Soroka] and to the Health Ministry. When the patient died, the department staff called her family immediately; at first it was difficult to get hold of them, but as soon as they were contacted, they came to the hospital. The doctor in charge at the time explained to them all the details of the tragic incident."

Kahalani suggests further discussion of Yassin release

RAINE MARGUS

INTERNAL Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said yesterday that he predicts that discussions to release Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin from prison will continue. Kahalani visited the ailing Yassin in Ramle's Ayalon prison hospital wing yesterday, during a tour of the wing and the Nitzan lock up. Yassin is assisted by two helpers, other prisoners whose duty is to feed and take care of him.

"In the past, the case of Sheikh Yassin has been discussed and there is room to discuss his release," said Kahalani, who asked Yassin himself if he is satisfied with his medical treatment and conditions. Yassin replied that he was reasonably satisfied but that he would like to be transferred to a prison closer to his family, and that he does not receive sufficient visits. His youngest daughter, he added, visits regularly with his wife, but he asked Kahalani to help organize visits for his remaining 11 children.

Yassin also said that Israel should grant Palestinians the rights they deserve. Kahalani said that Yassin also should be allowed to pray with other prisoners instead of alone.

Kahalani also visited the prison's drug free wing, chained with prisoners about their experiences, and was greeted by outgoing Prisons Service Commissioner Arye Bibi and his successor Amoz Azani, who is shortly leaving the Northern District police force where he served as area's commander.

WEATHER

Haifa	10-20
Tiberias	9-22
Afula	7-21
Sarnaria	5-18
Tel Aviv	11-21
Jerusalem	4-16
Beersheba	7-22
Dead Sea	11-25
Eilat	12-24
Golan	9-15

Forecast: Partly cloudy.

Knesset donut war: Round II

LIAT COLLINS

THE politicization of the humble donut continued yesterday. One week after a debate in the Knesset plenum on the distribution of donuts to soldiers by Habad followers, the balls of calories turned into ammunition in an argument at the outset of a Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meeting.

The trigger for the second round of the donut war was a visit by Habad to the committee room where they wanted to leave a tray of the goods on the table for the MKs to enjoy.

Labor faction leader Ra'anan Cohen, who was in the room at the time although he is not a committee member, found that even the sight of the donuts made him sick.

"No thank you. We have enough donuts of our own we don't need yours," he said. "[Habad] is a political body and you're trying to use the Knesset for your own means. It's not acceptable," said Cohen. He even called on the Knesset Speaker and Clerk to have the Habadniks - and donuts - bounced out of the House.

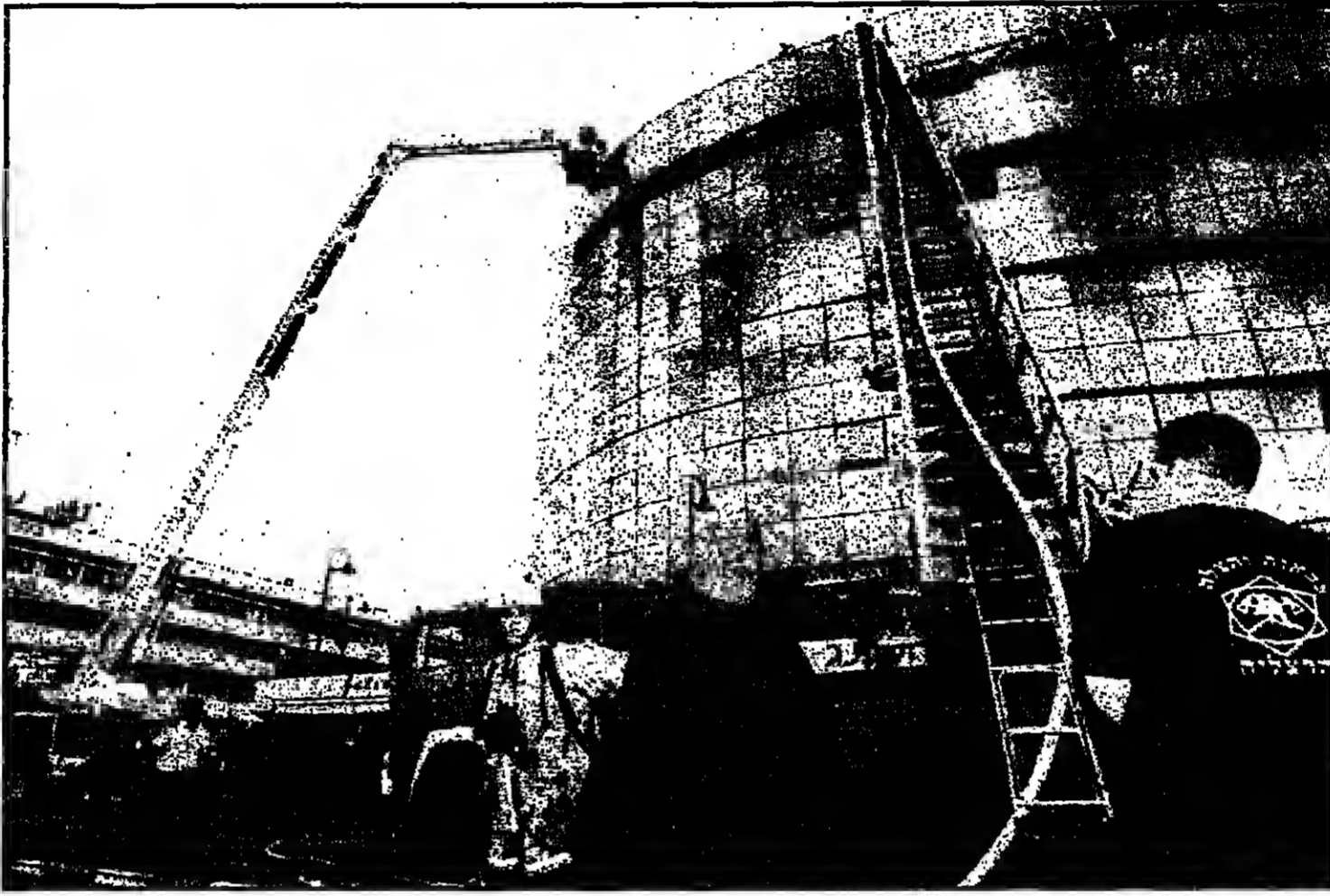
Committee chairman Uzi Landau (Likud) thought Cohen's objections were in poor taste. He told him there was no reason to deprive committee members of the chance to eat donuts. He said the visit was coordinated with him and was in the spirit of the decision taken by Defense Minister

Yitzhak Mordechai last week to allow soldiers to continue to receive the traditional gift of donuts on Hanukka.

Landau accepted the edible traditional Hanukka gift, and was among the first MKs to finish one. The donuts were quickly devoured by other MKs who found the declared intentions of the donuts' donors easier to swallow.

Cohen and Meretz leader Yossi Sarid demonstrably refrained from eating the evidence of Habad's visit. "I like donuts, but not those with a political taste," said Cohen. "These were political donuts. Habad is a movement with a declared political line. This was not innocent. At this rate we'll soon be letting Uzi Meshulam's followers into the Knesset to give out burekas," he said.

Sarid also saw the donuts as political hot potatoes. He explained the reason he was not prepared to taste the donuts by saying: "Habad has distributed so much poison in Israeli society over the last few years, and particularly before the last elections, that one can't tell if some of this poison has been absorbed by their donuts. Also, it's not clear why Habad insists on giving IDF soldiers such unhealthy food and donuts which are full of oil, calories, and cholesterol."



Firefighters battle a large electrical fire that broke out yesterday in the Mercazim 2001 building in the Herzliya industrial area. The seventh floor, which houses the building's computers, was engulfed in flames. The fire caused several hundred-thousand shekels in damage. There were no injuries, as all the occupants were evacuated safely. (Assaf Shilo/Israel Sun)

AROUND THE WORLD

	LOW	HIGH
Amsterdam	1-11	12-18
Berlin	2-11	12-18
Buenos Aires	21-27	28-34
Caracas	24-30	31-37
Chicago	3-10	11-17
Copenhagen	4-11	12-18
Frankfurt	5-12	13-19
Geneva	6-13	14-20
Helsinki	7-14	15-21
Hong Kong	16-22	23-29
Jakarta	24-30	31-37
London	8-15	16-22
Los Angeles	13-20	21-27
Moscow	14-21	22-28
Mumbai	24-30	31-37
New York	9-16	17-23
Paris	10-17	18-24
Rome	11-18	19-25
Sao Paulo	21-27	28-34
Sydney	16-22	23-29
Tokyo	17-23	24-30
Toronto	18-24	25-31
Vienna	12-19	20-26
Zurich	13-20	21-27

Winning numbers and cards

THE winning numbers in last night's weekly Loto draw were: 8, 10, 20, 36, and 49. The additional number was 32.

In yesterday's daily Chanc drawing, the winning cards were: nine of spades, nine of hearts, king of diamonds and ace of clubs.

Ichilov doctor charged with beating woman

RAINE MARGUS

PROFESSOR Moshe Lazar, head of the opic medicine ward at Tel Aviv's Ichilov hospital, has been charged by Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court with the assault of a Bulgarian doctor who came here for a study course and with whom he was apparently romantically involved.

The doctor was sent here for training and met Lazar professionally, although a closer relationship apparently developed between the pair. According to the charge sheet, Lazar brutally beat her in his car in the parking lot of Wolfson Hospital. She was hospitalized with bruises and cuts on her body.

Lazar's lawyer said the sequence of events were totally opposite to those represented by police and the doctor, and that in fact the latter beat up Lazar, who simply retaliated. The District Attorney's office intends to expedite the Bulgarian doctor's testimony against Lazar to enable her to return to her native country.

US protests Israeli threats against Palestinian-Americans

ISRAEL is discriminating against Palestinian-American residents of Jerusalem by threatening to revoke their residency rights unless they give up their American passports, the US Consul General in Jerusalem said yesterday.

The US has protested the practice to the Israeli government, but "we've never gotten a satisfactory answer," Edward Abington told The Associated Press.

Targeted by the threats are Palestinians

who live in east Jerusalem. They have permanent residency rights in Jerusalem, but are not Israeli citizens.

Palestinians and local human rights groups say that in recent months, Israel's Interior Ministry has revoked hundreds of residency permits in an effort to reduce the number of Palestinians in Jerusalem and strengthen its claim to the city.

Abington said the consulate knows of approximately 60 cases of Palestinian-

Americans who have received such threats.

"It's created some real personal hardships for people," he said. "There have been cases where people wanted to go back to the States to visit dying relatives, but they're afraid to leave because they're not sure they'll be allowed to come back."

The consulate took out an advertisement yesterday in Arabic and English language newspapers in Jerusalem to reassure Palestinian-Americans that Israel can't

force them to give up their US citizenship.

"It is impossible for a US citizen to lose US citizenship involuntarily, by force or duress," the ad said.

The ad said people asked by the Interior Ministry to renounce their American citizenship or surrender their US passport should contact the consulate.

Interior Ministry spokeswoman Tova Elinson denied Israel had asked residents to give up American citizenship, saying

Israel allows people with residency permits to hold citizenship of another country.

She said there have been cases in which people lost their residency permits under Israeli law because they were out of the country for more than seven years.

Elinson said that US Ambassador Martin Indyk met with Interior Minister Eli Suissa on the issue, and the two agreed that Indyk would present specific cases for the Interior Ministry to study. (AP)

Friedman praises PM intervention at ADL address

TOM TUGEND
LOS ANGELES

"If I had known that my appearance would stir such controversy and draw such press attention," Tom Friedman told his ADL audience in grave tones, "I would have brought my book for sale."

With this sally, the *New York Times* foreign affairs analyst sought to draw a light-hearted line under a two-week fracas that went international when David Bar-Ilan, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's policy planning and communications director told a reporter

Friedman was an "anti-Zionist" and should not be given a platform by a US pro-Israel organization.

Friedman praised Netanyahu's intervention in the matter as "the decent thing to do," and that he accepted the prime minister's "complete disassociation" from attempts to shut down this dinner.

The whole incident, Friedman added, "is not about my views, but

whether certain elements can tell us what to think and who has the right to talk.

"I can take care of myself," said the two-time Pulitzer Prize winner for his reporting on the Middle East. "But what about you? Your Jewish newspaper? Your organization?"

Friedman praised the ADL for resisting the pressure to cancel his appearance. "I am thankful that ADL fought this with all the vigor that it fights intolerance," he said. "I will gladly get into the trenches with ADL. I stand shoulder to shoulder with Abe Foxman and [ADL regional director] David Lehrer."

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Signs of life from kidnapped Chechnyan Jew

A Chechnyan Jew, who was kidnapped and threatened by his captors with execution a week ago, is still alive, according to reports reaching Jerusalem.

"A definitive sign of life has been received from Gilad Dadaev," a source close to the family said yesterday. "The people holding him did not carry out their threat to kill him [last Tuesday] unless a large ransom was paid," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The source added that contacts were currently underway to free Dadaev.

Family members yesterday declined to comment on the reports, saying that publicity could harm Dadaev's life. *Batsheva Tsar*

Advertiser: Channel 2 ratings inflated

The Channel 2 franchisees have been publishing ratings which indicate at least double the actual viewing, said Ya'acov Gelbard, chairman of the Advertisers Association and chairman of the board of directors of Co-op Blue Square.

Gelbard was speaking yesterday at a news conference in advance of the Media 1997 conference which opens on Saturday night in Tel Aviv.

"Today we are in a situation of total lack of information, and we cannot rely on the figures being published on ratings," he said. *Itim*

Russian Arabist likely next ambassador

A leading Russian Arabist, Michael Bogdanov, is the likely candidate to be the next Russian ambassador to Israel in the spring, Foreign Ministry officials confirm.

Bogdanov, who is deputy head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Middle East department, has served in diplomatic posts both in Syria and Lebanon. Bogdanov, who has yet to win formal approval of his Foreign Ministry, must be confirmed by the Russian Duma or parliament. *Jerusalem Post Staff*